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[JANETA UNDERSTOOD THE TRUTH AT LAST. THIS WAS THE MAN SHE THOUGHT SHE HAD MARRIED!]

A FEARFUL SECRET.

CHAPTER V.—(continued.)

Mrs. CARLYLE was neither stupid nor unobtrusive, and yet she never connected the white, scared face of her new protégée with her own photographic album.

The widow was one of those women who trust entirely where they trust at all. She had no faith in half-measures. Having taken a fancy to Janeta, not only as the child of her old friend, but because the girl attracted her by a nameless fascination, the mistress of Hillington Place would as soon have suspected herself as have doubted her young companion.

"You look tired to death, Nettie!" she said, quietly, putting one hand on the girl's shoulder. "Are you quite sure you would not like to go to bed?"

By a desperate effort poor Janeta rallied her energies. She smiled—yes, actually smiled—in her friend's face.

"I am quite sure I am not sleepy, and

would far rather stay with you. I own I feel a little bewildered by all the grandeur around me. Do you know, Mrs. Carlyle, I have never in my life seen the inside of such a house as this. It seems like a fairy palace!"

"I have not a fairy's wand, dear child; but I hope I shall be able to make you happy here!"

They went into dinner, Mrs. Carlyle in her rich black silk—she had never worn bright colours since her widowhood—Janeta in the self-same grey gown which had served for her wedding dress.

Mrs. Carlyle noted the probable lack of evening attire, and privately resolved to take Janeta on a shopping expedition the next day. It would never do for Aunt Susan and her girls to see that plain woollen frock.

They sat in the winter-garden after dinner, Nettie making tea, and entranced by the beauty of the scene.

"You don't wonder now that I love my home?" said Mrs. Carlyle, "and prefer even too many attentions from my kith and kin to deserting Hillington?"

"I understand you must love the Place

dearly!" answered Janeta, frankly; "but I can't make out why you put up with so much annoyance!"

The widow sighed.

"You think I might give all these good people the cold shoulder. Do you know, Janeta, I was once—before my marriage—a poor relation myself, and I remember all I suffered too well ever to inflict the like pain on any living creature. Besides, they are Geoffrey's relations. The money was his, not mine. I can't make all of them rich—it is not in my power; but I can see that all—especially the poorer ones—have a really pleasant time when they visit me, and a full share of my good things. Do you know, Nettie, my housekeeper ^s reads a more extensive feast when the 'family' come than she would do for the richest friends I have? I don't think I ever forgot one of their birthdays. I can't like them all; but I try to do something for them."

"You must be very good!"

"Not at all," said Mrs. Carlyle, quickly. "If I were I should condemn myself to one or two of the girls always with me—turn and turn about. Oh, no, I am not good; but I

try to be kind; and I frankly believe, Nettie, all the 'candidates' would be sorry if I died. They don't look on me as their defrauder, and I think a few of them are honestly fond of me in spite of the money."

"How did you come to call them the candidates?"

"It was my sister's doing (she is dead now). When she heard of Geoffrey's will she persisted, in styling all his relations the candidates for Hillington. It was not a bad idea; and, somehow, except in speaking to the servants or to one of themselves, in which case I always say the 'family,' I have grown into the way of using poor Kate's name for them."

Janeta longed to ask Mrs. Carlyle point blank whether Mr. Drew were a great friend of hers, and if he often visited at Hillington; but the questions died on her lips.

Had she possessed no secret she would have asked this freely, for Mrs. Carlyle was not the kind of person to take offence; but now the thought that she was his wife made it almost impossible for her to speak the name of the man who had wooed her so passionately at Derby.

Was it really only four days since she had left the little watering-place?

Could it be that only a week had passed since, in Mrs. Rice's sitting-room, she and her lover had planned out that miserable marriage.

Mrs. Carlyle interrupted her reverie.

"We shall be sixteen to-morrow, Nettie. Then there are several more candidates in the neighbourhood who must be asked to dinner afterwards; but I hope we shall clear them off this week."

"And then?" asked Nettie, half-dreamily, "may you leave them alone a little while, or do you have to begin at the beginning, and go straight through the list again?"

"Oh, no!" laughed her friend. "That would be too dreadful. I shall not give any more invitations till just before Christmas. Half-a-dozen of the younger ones—generally come for a week then, and everyone within reach eats their Christmas dinner with me. Of course, some of them drop in without being asked. The Bidens, in particular, are fond of coming to lunch; but that is different."

"Very different. Did you say there were six Miss Bidens? Are they all grown up?"

"There are seven—the youngest is twenty."

"But what is to become of them?" asked Janeta. "Are they always going to live at home with their mother?"

"Susan hopes they will marry. I don't think it likely; for six of them are plain, and the seventh only passable. I have promised the wedding breakfast, a moderate trousseau, and a thousand pounds to any of them that can claim it; but I don't in the least expect ever to be called on to keep my word."

"Poor girls! They must be very dull!"

Mrs. Carlyle's lip curled. "It is their mother's fault. She should have let them try and earn their own living. I told her once they would be far happier; but she nearly quarrelled with me on the spot. Her income, all told, is two hundred a year. I think Augustus helps her, and I know I do; but it must be a hard struggle."

"Where do they live?"

"In a cottage near the church. Two or three of the girls work in the parish. There is a very attractive curate, but I don't think he'll lose his heart to one of my nieces."

"I don't like curates!"

"Why not?"

"I suppose it is a prejudice. I never spoke to one in my life; but they are so fond of tennis!"

Mrs. Carlyle was laughing heartily.

"That's not a crime, my dear! I predict you will like Mr. Ainslie very much indeed. There are so very few young men in the place, he is a good deal run after; but I don't believe he knows it. He is the simplest, most unaffected young fellow I ever met."

"I don't think young men are fond of the

country," said Janeta, gravely. "There were very few at Normanton."

Mrs. Carlyle looked up with sudden interest.

"And did you lose your heart to any one of the few? You look so grave sometimes, I had begun to wonder whether in leaving Normanton you had to part from any close friend!"

"Oh, no," said Janeta with feverish eagerness, thankful she could at least speak the truth. "Oh no! I never spoke to a young man after my cousins left; and the only two people I regret in Normanton are my kind old school-mistress and Nathalie Duval, a little girl of fourteen I was fond of."

"And the cousins?" asked Mrs. Carlyle, quickly. "How old are they, my dear?"

"Dick is eighteen," said Nettie, frankly, "and Charlie is nearly twenty. He is the best-looking, but I like Dick even so much better. He is the dearest boy in the world!"

Not the way girls speak of a lover. Besides, Janeta was womanly beyond her years. It was impossible to think of her as in love with a boy of eighteen.

Mrs. Carlyle drew a sigh of relief.

"Then I need not fear your breaking your heart away from old scenes!" she said, brightly. "Do you know, Nettie, the greatest trouble I have had since I set up a companion?"

Nettie shook her head.

"It seems my taste was just that of the gentlemen of the neighbourhood. If I got a really nice girl I could love and feel at home with, someone who were to steal her away from me. The last I lost was Miss Hutton's sister. She married our last curate, and he was malicious enough to tell me if I wanted a companion I could keep. I must choose someone older and uglier. That was when he went to his new living three months ago. He was good enough to spare me his fiancée for a few weeks while he settled down and got the Vicarage ready for her; but I lost her more than a month ago. He was a nice man, though he did not come up to Hugh Ainslie. Augustus Carlyle is delighted with Mr. Ainslie!"

Janeta prepared to hate the curate on the spot.

"Does he live with the Rector?"

"Oh, dear, no! He has a charming house. He's not like the regular line of curates; he has private means. Besides, there's a living in his family, and I believe he would be quite content to vegetate here until it falls in; and as the Vicar of Alandyke is over eighty, he won't have to wait long."

"Is Alandyke near here?" and Janeta hoped her voice did not betray her agitation.

"About ten miles off. It lies between here and Sandford. I often go there; at least, I used in the old lord's time. He was a distant relation of mine, and I believe, tolerated me more than other people. His son Jack was almost like my own son. I forget, you are not Yorkshire bred, Nettie—you may not know the romance of Alandyke?"

She told the story of Lady Claudine's falsehood, much as Janeta had already heard it; but she praised Lord Drew with earnest warmth, declaring that, though people deemed him eccentric and visionary, he was one of the noblest men in England.

"What would they have?" she asked, eagerly. "For six months he was poor, and nearly everyone cut him. (I'm glad to think he spent one month out of those six at the Place.) His betrothed deserted him, his friends fought shy. Then the wheel of Fortune turned; he had all he once expected. He was Lord Drew of Alandyke, and could have made a peeress of Lady Claudine. I suppose people expected he'd forget their conduct, and be ready to be picked up again. He wasn't, and for my part I don't blame him. Alandyke is in excellent hands; the tenants and property are well cared for. Why should Jack shut himself up in a lonely house? He's seen too much treachery to have much faith in his fellow-creatures. He prefers books, and

Nature, science and scenery. Why shouldn't he have them? He's rich enough to afford it if he likes."

"And is he miserable?"

"Not a bit of it. No one but a bad man is ever thoroughly miserable, Janeta. Jack had done no wrong to anyone. His own conscience acquitted him. Why should he be unhappy?"

"Lady Claudine—"

"Lady Claudine nearly broke his heart; but he soon saw he had worshipped an ideal that never existed, and now he's as heart-whole as any man in England. It has aged him, I grant, and made him stern, almost hard. He doesn't look in the least like a young man, and he shuns society; won't even look at a woman; prefers to live in a tent all the summer months. But, as I said before, if he likes to be eccentric, why shouldn't he? He's rich enough to afford it."

"Have you seen him lately?"

"He joined me at Richmond for a few days. I must say I am proud of Jack. I did my best, Nettie, to make him change his way of life, and I very nearly got him to promise that Alandyke should be reopened this winter."

"You worked wonders."

"I used an argument I was ashamed of. You must know, my dear, Lord Drew has a cousin whom I detest. His likeness is in my album. I can't very well remove it without seeming to insult Jack. Besides, he is one of the candidates."

Janeta started.

"One of the candidates!"

"His mother was Anne Carlyle. I have seen a good deal of John—he was always called John, to distinguish him from Jack. I don't mind telling you, Nettie, he is so good-looking and so plausible, I half meant, at one time, to make him my heir. But I found out something about him—never mind what, the story is not fit for your ears—and I told him, point-blank, I could never believe in him again. I would keep the secret from the family, but only on consideration—he never came here. That was more than a year ago. He went straight to Jack, and has been spongeing on him ever since. I must say he has obeyed me, and never shown his face here; and I have kept my promise, and never traduced him to the 'family.' He's rather a favourite with his aunts. Old ladies are so easily taken in; and John Drew is one of those men who can make you think black is white, if they only try."

Janeta was thankful that a large fern hid her face from Mrs. Carlyle.

She had wanted to know the extent of her friend's acquaintance with John Drew, but she had never expected such a revelation as this.

"I told Jack the whole story," went on Mrs. Carlyle. "At least, he had heard it before. I asked him if he would like such a man as his cousin to rule at Alandyke, to represent the Drews? He said 'No'; but he could never forget John had been faithful to him in the time of his poverty. Just for that his house and purse must be open to him. I told him I'd nothing to say against that, but did he mean John ever to be Lord Drew of Alandyke, because he was going the way for it?"

"But how could he prevent it?"

Mrs. Carlyle smiled.

"By marrying and having a son of his own. Why should he spend a lonely life because one woman was false? I talked and talked, Nettie, till he almost promised to spend Christmas in Yorkshire, and appear for the first time at Alandyke as its master."

"Will he bring his cousin?" asked Janeta.

Mrs. Carlyle shook her head.

"Not unless he is mad! John Drew would not be welcome in this neighbourhood. If ever he is Lord Drew people might try to forget the scandal, but they won't try till then."

"But I thought no one suspected it but you?"

"No one knows the worst blot of all but myself, but it is no secret that he is over head

and cars in debt. How he lives I have no idea. He can paint charming pictures, but he is too lazy often to take up a brush. Jack, who is a rich man, works far harder than Mr. Drew. He almost broke his mother's heart, but she continued somehow to go on caring for him till she died, and believed up to the last that if he could only marry an heiress he might become a changed character."

Janeta went to bed with mixed feelings. She was safe at Hillington, from any chance of meeting with her husband; but the estimate of his character given, even by one so kind-hearted as Mrs. Carlyle, was terrible to think of. She did not love him. She meant—if only Heaven granted it—never to see his face again; but yet there was something awful in the consciousness she had tied herself to such a base nature. She might never have to live with him, but there was a strange degradation, even in the feeling she had suffered, his caresses and for a brief space believed in him.

What had he done? Something too terrible for her even to be told. Yet he was her husband.

The dinner-party the next day was a great success. Mrs. Carlyle had taken Janeta to the nearest town shopping. In these days of ready-made dresses, it was easy, with the aid of such an expert needlewoman as the manager of the costumes department, to procure sundry toilettes for Miss Leigh. Other things were ordered to be made, and the ladies drove home with so many parcels they might just have come off a long journey.

Dressed in virgin white, with a sash of many colours threaded together in some rare eastern fabric, her red gold hair plaited in a coronet on her head, no ornaments save soft bunches of heliotrope at her throat and waist, Mrs. Carlyle's companion looked a very attractive girl as she stood at her friend's side in the large drawing-room to assist in welcoming the "family."

And they all took to her. Not one unkind word, not one attempted slight, was offered to Miss Leigh.

Mrs. Carlyle had been quite right in saying her relations were only jealous of each other. Long ago they had made up their mind that in right of her riches the lady of the "Place" must be indulged in all her whims. If she really could not be happy without a girl to keep her company, and took a delight in dressing the said girl up and making a pet of her, why it was far better for them that the said girl should be a stranger—not one of their number—who would, of course, make use of her opportunities to extol her own particular branch of the family to the injury of all the others. Besides, a young lady did make Hillington Place brighter, and this Miss Leigh's music and singing were a real treat to listen to.

So both Mrs. Biden and Mrs. Augustus pressed Janeta to visit them whenever she had a leisure afternoon. The Rector offered her a district; the Miss Bidens consulted her as to their fancy work, and the young men paid her most deferential attentions. Her position could hardly have been more acknowledged if she had stood there Mrs. Carlyle's own relation instead of a mere hired servant.

It was not the custom of the "candidates" to ignore the subject nearest to their hearts. The young man—a nephew—who took Nettie into dinner informed her he thought Mrs. Carlyle would be sure to outlive all the members of her husband's generation.

"My father," he was a son of the Rev. Augustus, "and uncles and aunts are quite out of it; and, I think you know, it ought to come to one of their children, not to the lot whose parents were only Uncle Geoffrey's cousins. The poor old man left twenty nephews and fifteen nieces. I think my aunt might very well confine her choice to those thirty-five, don't you?"

"It seems a terrible responsibility," agreed Janeta. "In Mrs. Carlyle's place I should feel frightened."

"You see she can't divide it," went on the

young man. "She can't alienate a single tree. She's bound to leave it all intact to one of the family."

"She'd better write all the names on different pieces of paper and get someone to draw lots," suggested Janeta. "I think that would do."

He shook his head, a little shocked at her flippancy. He was a serious young man, especially where his own interests were in question.

"She never seemed to care for one of us more than another," he said, pathetically, "except John Drew. She was very fond of him. Seemed to look on him as better and grander than anyone else, but he hasn't been here for ages. Father says they had a split, but if so, it's been kept very dark. My aunt never mentions him. It's only that he's left off coming."

"Did you like him?"

Miles was quite confidential.

"I couldn't bear him, but none of us could—I mean at our house. Aunt Susan was very fond of him. I believe she thought he meant to marry one of the girls."

"But I thought you said he was poor?"

"He was in debt, but he never seemed poor. He had everything he wanted. Things we couldn't afford were just everyday necessities to him. He never paid for anything," added the young man, naively, "so perhaps, it didn't matter if his bills were long or short."

The weeks passed on, winter set in early, and Mrs. Carlyle and Janeta were more and more thrown on each other for society, but they stood the test. It really seemed as though the widow had taken her old friend's child to her heart, and Janeta expanded like a flower in the sunshine.

Her face lost its hard expression; her beautiful eyes no longer flashed with scorn. Happiness had softened and developed her until you would not have recognised Miss Spargo's unlovable pupil in the bright-faced girl who made the sunshine of Hillington Place.

Very early in her sojourn there she had gone over to Sandford. Mrs. Carlyle had friends in the little town, and went to them, while she sent Janeta to Captain Leigh's.

The widow had much difficulty in persuading the girl to go there. Nettie declared her father did not want her, and her stepmother would think her a burden.

"She cannot do that," returned Mrs. Carlyle, quietly, "It is your duty to go. If things are impracticable only stay half-an-hour. You will find me at the Hall, and my friends will welcome you warmly. If I don't see you I will come for you in time for us to catch the five-o'clock train."

With much reluctance Janeta went on to Ivy Cottage—a neat little house in a modest garden. The Captain was out, declared a small maid servant, but Mrs. Leigh was at home. Janeta sent in her name and entered.

Her heart melted when she saw the woman she had almost hated for filling her mother's place.

Alice Leigh had married almost from school, and was now barely twenty-five. It was the old story, possessed of a little money, and no knowledge of the world. She seemed, made for the prey of an adventurer.

Captain Leigh at forty, handsome, well-preserved, was a veritable hero to the school girl. They were married after a month's engagement, when uncle and guardian prudently insisting that Ivy Cottage and the little property in the funds should be settled on his niece.

The Captain soon tired of his toy. She had never been more to him than that. He spent most of the little income, gambling all the while at having to live in such an out-of-the-way place as Sandford.

Mrs. Leigh and her children lived almost in poverty. There was no absolute unkindness, only the chill neglect, which does even more towards breaking a woman's heart.

Janeta did not know all this for months.

Indeed, from her stepmother she never knew it; but the moment she saw the pale, sweet face, and neat, carefully-mended dress, her heart went out to the patient creature who, only six years older than herself, yet seemed so heavily weighted by the cares of life.

"I am Janeta," she said gently. "Father may have told you I am living at Hillington, and I thought I should like to come and see you."

"I am so glad. I have asked you so often I began to think my little girls would never learn to know their elder sister!"

Janeta opened her eyes.

"You have asked me here? I never had the invitation, or I should have been too glad to come!"

"I wrote to Mrs. Tremain several times, asking her to spare you at least for your holidays, but she always refused. At last I began to think you were prejudiced against me!"

"And I thought you hated the thought of me, and did not think me good enough to see your children."

Alice smiled.

"We were both mistaken, Janeta. I am very glad to see you, dear. I have tried to get your father to take me over to Hillington, but Mrs. Carlyle's is a grand house, and he seemed to dislike the idea of going there unless he could look prosperous, and that we have not been for a long time. Now I hope you have come to stay!"

Nettie coloured.

"I can stay till Mrs. Carlyle sends for me at five but please tell me if it is not convenient, and I could go on to her now."

But it was quite convenient, and the welcome was so warm and genuine Nettie could not doubt it.

Alice Leigh went for her little girls, pretty rosy children of five and six, who showed no trace of their mother's delicacy.

"And you are comfortable with Mrs. Carlyle?" asked the young stepmother. "Everyone praises her, but I have never seen her."

"She is kindness itself."

"And you are happy?"

"I ought to be."

Captain Leigh was a little astonished to see the tall, graceful girl in velvet dress and seal-skin coat, who was presented to him as his daughter.

He thought of the skinny, sickly-looking child he had left seven years ago, and decided time worked marvels.

He was a gentleman—despite a certain tendency to swagger in manner, and a slight fondness for inferior company—and one who could, if he exerted himself, be amusing. He had never had a strong character, but his manners were pleasing, and there was about him a kind of winning fascination to which, probably, he had owed both his wives—the sort of man with whom people might feel desperately angry in his absence, but whose excuses and apologies few could withstand.

As a tribute to his powers, let us say obdurate creditors had been known to call and threaten the Captain with summons, publicity, and all the terrors of the law, and yet retreat in ten minutes meek as lambs, not only having promised to "wait a little longer," but also to instruct their boy to call for orders as usual.

It pleased this personage to beat at his best today, and the consequence was, he made time pass so pleasantly for his wife and daughters that they were quite surprised when Mrs. Carlyle's fly stopped at the gate.

She came in, in her own gracious way; thanked the Captain for the loan of his daughter (most undeserved gratitude), and invited him and Mrs. Leigh to dine and sleep at the Place as soon as they could leave home.

Wardrobe reasons caused this kind invitation to be declined, but Mrs. Carlyle's visit had pleasant results for Ivy Cottage. Such hampers of fruit and flowers, butter and eggs, such baskets of game as made their way over

to Sandford at frequent intervals, not only brightened Alice's spirits by their kind remembrance, but proved a great help in the problem of how to live on two hundred a-year, when the master of the house spends about three-fourths of that sum on his *ménage* pleasures.

So the time passed on. Janeta settled down at Hillington as though she had lived there for years. She was a favourite with many of the candidates, and was politely treated by all. The old servants at the Place loved her, and grew into the way of speaking of her, as "our young lady" as though they adopted her as one of the family; but through all that time two subjects troubled Janeta. She could not forget the terrible secret she carried locked in her heart; and as the winter days grew shorter, and Hugh Ainslie spent more and more of his rare leisure at Hillington Place, an awful fear crept into her thoughts that he came there for her sake.

There was not one spark of coquetry in Janeta. She had sinned once through ambition, but she was not one of those heartless women who lure a man on to love them, knowing it must be vain. She herself was untouched. She liked the curate, esteemed him truly; but had that meeting at Dorbury never been she yet would not have become Mrs. Ainslie. How was she to let him know? She shrank from ever hinting her suspicions to Mrs. Carlyle. What if she were mistaken, and was planning to refuse a proposal that would never come? Besides, the curate was a great favourite with the widow, and she would certainly think him a good match for Nettie.

The chance came at last. Janeta and her friend were calling at the Rectory, and Mr. Ainslie begged Miss Leigh to go over to the church and try a new anthem on the organ. No one volunteered to accompany them. It was not a stone's throw at most.

"Shall you be with us at Christmas, Miss Leigh?"

"Oh, yes."

His face lighted up.

"I feared you would be going home?"

"Oh, no! I have been away from my father for seven years, and his house does not seem really home to me. I shall stay with Mrs. Carlyle as long as she will keep me."

"She would like to keep you for years."

"Then I hope she will. I am very fond of her."

"But, after all, it is not your home! Would you not like a home of your own, of which you would be queen?"

"I shall never be queen of any home. Please don't contradict me, Mr. Ainslie. I know you mean that, some day, I might meet someone who liked me well enough to marry me" (he can't think I mean him, she reflected here), "but, indeed, I shall never marry anyone. I seem gay and lighthearted, but there is a turned-down page in my life. I may live to be an old, old woman, Mr. Ainslie, but you will never hear my wedding-bells."

"I felt the first time I ever saw you that you had had a heavy sorrow. I longed then, I have longed since to comfort you."

"No one can do that."

"Forgive me, but time softens all sorrows. Dearly as we love our dead, truly as we mourn them, years change our grief into a loving memory!"

"I know it," said Janeta. "Time heals even dead sorrows, but there are some living ones it cannot cure. Mr. Ainslie, I know I can trust you; you will never betray me. If ever I seem gay and light-hearted, you must not think me reckless, or that I am cured. It will only be that I am trying to forget."

"You can trust me."

A silence. He was pressing back his life's dearest hopes. Then he put out his hand.

"You will let me be your friend?"

"Always, if you will; but, Mr. Ainslie, you know so little about me, I may be the blackest of sinners for aught you can tell."

He shook his head.

"You may have been mistaken," he said

gravely. "But no one, not even yourself, shall speak harshly of you before me; and now," as he turned to open the heavy church door, "I only ask you to remember this. Whatever happens, Miss Leigh, we are friends. In any trouble, any sorrow, only trust me, and I will help you as faithfully as though you were my sister."

Nettie realised dimly the nobleness of the heart that might had been offered to her, the generosity of the man who asked no questions, and yet had such perfect faith in her as to offer her his friendship in spite of her mysterious allusions.

"You were a long time with Mr. Ainslie this afternoon?" said Mrs. Carlyle, as they drove home.

"The anthem was difficult to play at sight."

"Was that all, Nettie? You are not going to tell me I must look out for another companion since you have promised to be our curate's!"

"I shall never leave you while you will keep me," answered Janeta; "and indeed! indeed! you are mistaken in thinking Mr. Ainslie will ask me to."

Christmas was to be kept on a grand scale at Hillington Place. The whole Biden family were to stay in the house for a fortnight. Every other relative within reach was to come to the great five o'clock dinner, and a round dozen of young men were expected from London on Christmas Eve, with the understanding they were to stay until the New Year, provided their employers' offices and clients, as the case might be, consented to dispense with their services for so long a time.

Mrs. Biden arrived two days before she was expected, namely, on Saturday.

"You know, Janeta," she told her hostess, "I felt it could make no difference to you, and it was really sinful to have a Sunday's joint cooked when we shouldn't be able to get through it before we came away."

Aunt Susan was much given to speaking in *italics*.

Mrs. Carlyle, who pitied her both for her poverty and her tribe of ugly daughters, assured her she was welcome; and Janeta Leigh, who had come to understand a little of the poor lady's bitter struggle, herself went upstairs with Aunt Susan to see that the fire burnt brightly, and all comforts were duly awaiting her.

"My dear!" said the poor, harassed woman, as Nettie made her sit down in an easy-chair and took off her bonnet for her, "where did you pick up your ways? my girls are not bad girls, but three of them are given up to religion, and think too much of the parish to remember their mother; and the other four have only one object—to get married. There's not one of the seven would try to make things pleasant for a strange, old woman as you do. Only don't tell their aunt, Poor children! it might spoil their chances."

Nettie knew perfectly not one of the seven possessed any, but she was far too kindhearted to say so.

"I should never speak to Mrs. Carlyle against her relations. I think if one or two of your daughters married it would make things pleasanter for the rest. A brother-in-law must be nearly as good as a brother!"

"My dear, I quite agree with you. I'll let you into a little secret. That's the very reason I've come here to day!"

Janeta opened her eyes.

"But there are no gentlemen here! There are none invited even, except the relations (she had very nearly said candidates), and I suppose they wouldn't do."

"I heard this morning," said Mrs. Biden, in an oracular tone—"it was my servant Betty, who is own sister to the gardener at Alandyke, so it must be true—Lord Drew has come home. Now, every one knows Mrs. Carlyle is his greatest friend. He must be here for Christmas, and most likely before, so I said to the girls, we'll start this afternoon; there's nothing like being in time."

"But—"

Mrs. Biden interrupted her.

"He was jilted you mean. Oh, yes! I know all about that. Why, my dear, Jack Drew and my Nancy played together as children! He and my girls were almost brought up together! What is more natural than after having been deceived by his grand Lady Claudine his heart should turn to the innocent playmates of his childhood?"

Janeta privately hoped it would not turn towards more than one playmate, for, as the law stood at present, even a nobleman was not allowed two wives.

She thought it just possible, if he were very much disgusted by beauty, fashion, and grace in the person of Lady Claudine, he might turn towards one of the Bidens, who certainly boasted neither of the three gifts.

"Lady Drew of Alandyke!" she repeated, half mechanically, thinking of the days when she had believed that would be her title. "It sounds nice!"

"It would be delightful!" sighed Aunt Susan, "and it's not as though he was a stranger. I knew Jack well. You see he and my nephew John are cousins, and seemed like brothers!"

"Is Mr. John Drew one of the relations coming for Christmas?" asked Janeta, who knew to the contrary, but wished to draw out Aunt Susan's sentiments.

"Oh, dear no! He offended my sister. Such a pity, my dear; for a more charming young man I never met. He and my Laura adored each other, and I must confess if dear Janeta passed over my dear girls, John would make a suitable heir. He told me frankly after his breach with Janeta his prospects were bad. He dared not think of marriage, but I knew where his wishes had been, and who, had things only gone smoothly, would have been his choice. Poor Laura! She has never been quite the same girl since, but it was most disinterested of him not to drag her into a long, wearisome engagement. Was it not?"

The girl who was John Drew's wife doubted his being disinterested under any circumstances; but she understood perfectly how he had made this simple mother of seven daughters believe in him.

She pitied Mrs. Biden. She now felt a rush of kindness for Laura, the youngest and the least plain of the young ladies. She went back to her own room with a strange new sense of sadness at her heart.

She dressed herself, with Nancy's help, in one of the new gowns Mrs. Carlyle had bought her especially for this Christmastide. It was the only one Nettie had selected herself, and her kind benefactress had marvelled at the choice.

"You are too young for black!" she exclaimed. "Have the dress by all means, if you fancy it; but promise me not to wear it if it does not suit you?"

Janeta Leigh, however, was of opinion that it suited her very well. It was of black velvet and fitted like a glove. *Cut en princesse*, it hung in long soft folds; the train was long, and was lined with dark cardinal satin, which showed sometimes as she moved about, and was the only touch of colour about the dress. For the rest it was high to the throat; but the sleeves were short to show the beauty of her round white arms. Her red-gold hair was combed high, and coiled round her head. There was not a single ornament about her, except a tiny silver clasp which fastened the lace round her throat.

Nancy was in raptures; Janeta herself felt sad. In days gone by it had comforted her to think she was not plain—that in her shabby, old-fashioned gear she looked better than many girls with West end dressmakers; but to-night, when she wore the toilette the own caprice had designed, when she knew she was looking more attractive than she had ever done before, there was not one throb of exultation at her heart.

What did it matter that she was fair to see since between her and any bright future

stood the memory of that September morning when she suffered John Drew to put his ring upon her finger!

"Just look at the night, miss!" said Nancy, as she held back one of the curtains for a moment. "It's not been snowing an hour, and yet the grounds are quite white. What a mercy it's not Monday, when all our visitors are expected!"

"Mrs. Biden will be glad she got here before the storm."

"Ay. She and the young ladies was in a mind to be in time! Only fancy, Miss Leigh, you'll be ten ladies at dinner and not a gentleman to be seen! It's a thing I've never known happen here. Mistress has ordered dinner in the hall. The porter goes off duty at seven now, and every night dinner's to be laid there. It's one of our Christmas customs."

"Isn't it cold?"

"Why no, Miss Leigh. There's a fire half-way up the chimney. I like the sight when there's a lot of visitors. Often I've gone up in the gallery to have a look round; and what with the glass and flowers, the firelight and the bright colours of the ladies' dresses, it has seemed just like fairy land."

The bell sounded punctually at half-past seven. Mrs. Carlyle apologised, with a smile, for the lack of escort, and the ten ladies gathered round the old oak table. Janeta looking like some old-world picture in her quaint black robe. Two of the courses had been removed, and the third was being despatched when there came a loud knocking at the outer door.

Hill looked at his mistress.

"Open it, of course. The meanest tramp should not be turned from my door at Christmas time, particularly on a night like this! If it is a beggar you must find him a shelter till the morning."

The door was flung open. All eyes turned to the figure who stood there. Tall and broad-shouldered, it was evidently masculine, but nothing more could be discovered, since the snowflakes made the stranger look like a veritable Father Christmas.

"My horse cast a shoe, or I should have been here hours ago. Mrs. Carlyle, did you expect me to take you at your word, and ride over unbidden?"

At the first sound of his voice Janeta felt she knew it. Mrs. Carlyle left her seat and went towards the door in eager greeting. Hill and one of his satellites promptly removed great coat and muffler, when there stood revealed the stranger Janeta had seen in the train, who had warned her to be true to herself and prophesied they should meet again.

"Nettie," said Mrs. Carlyle's voice!—oh how strange and far away it sounded in the girl's ears!—"Nettie, come here, and help me to welcome the wanderer back to civilisation. Jack, let me introduce you to my little friend."

Even then the whole truth did not dawn on Janeta; but Mrs. Biden and her seven girls were quicker of perception. They all started for the door, and promptly stretched out their hands to welcome the stranger.

"Lord Drew, welcome home! Welcome to Yorkshire!" cried the mother, while the daughters joined in a ready chorus of "welcome, welcome!"

Janeta's head swam round and round. She understood the truth at last. This was the man she believed for a few hours she had married. This was Lord Drew of Alan-dyke!

(To be continued.)

A GENEROUS, a brave, a noble deed, performed by an adversary, commands our approbation; while in its consequences it may be acknowledged prejudicial to our particular interest.

ROY'S INHERITANCE.

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CHAPTER XXII.

Poor Nora Macdonald! Her castle in the air seemed, indeed, to be trembling about her pretty head. Roy would hate her, if she were the heiress of Mountfalcon; and yet if she failed to win the prize she would have sacrificed herself for nothing.

Was ever a heroine in so deplorable a plight? Look where she would, there was no ray of light—not a simple crumb of comfort.

Philip Falconer watched her with warmer light than usual in the cold, grey eyes. He knew that the Duchess had detained him, out of pure curiosity, to ask so many questions about his father, therefore her graciousness did not flatter him in the least. He saw that her beauty was impaired by the lines of sorrow and regret, and mentally compared her to her disadvantage with Nora's youthful charms. The interview with his nephew kept him on thorns, but he could not break away from the Duchess without seeming a perfect boor. He was consoled, however, when he saw Roy walk off with his chin in the air, and Nora standing like a petrified statue of grief. With consummate skill he played his game, taking no notice of her dejection, but leading her on to regard himself as a friend whose advice might be useful to her on occasions.

He was so kind, so considerate. Even in speaking of Roy, who was so ready to misjudge him, he took care to say everything that was flattering.

To hear him, anyone might have believed that he was a most affectionate uncle, who deplored his nephew's follies simply because he was so sorry for his losing his inheritance.

Nora, with no one to watch over her, let herself gradually slide towards a friendship which had seemed so impossible to her from the first. She felt so reckless now, as if she scarcely cared what she said or did; and Philip Falconer was the sort of man to find this out with the sharpness of a ferret, and to take advantage of it without the smallest scruple.

Grimper saw what was going on far better than Nora herself, and her indignation grew hotter and hotter as the cold spring days went on, and Philip still lingered at Mountfalcon.

"You tell his lordship that he's here, and that'll soon cook his hash," she said to Venables. "I'd out with it fast enough, only I've never got the opportunity; but you might do it a hundred times a day!"

"So I might," agreed the valet, "but it's not well to offend the young for the sake of the old!"

"You don't call Mr. Philip young?" with fierce contempt. "I know this, if this interloping young-hussy thinks to make a match of it with a gentleman as thinks nothing of shooting his father, I'll up and forbid the bairns."

"Much good that would do. What do you think of the Captain? They would make a handsome pair!" watching her face very closely.

Grimper tossed her head, whilst her cheeks flushed with anger.

"The Captain, indeed! Why, he can mate with the highest in the land. There's a Duchess who would give her eyes to have him; there's her sister ready to jump if he crooked his finger, and you want him to throw himself away on a slip of a girl of no account at all! I wonder you are not ashamed to say such a thing!"

Venables smiled with an air of superiority.

"Miss Macdonald's the daughter of a Baronet, and she don't take a penny from his lordship—"

"What's she here for?" interrupting him eagerly.

"Sometimes I think it's a plant, and that she's here to make it straight for the Captain."

"Not a bit of it," in supremest scorn. "She's

hand and glove with Mr. Philip; a galloping about the park with him, a-sitting with him till past ten o'clock at night. It makes me sick, it do."

"The poor girl must talk to somebody!"

"Let her talk to the sofas and chairs if she wants to use her tongue."

"There's his lordship's bell. I'll leave you to the sofas and chairs, and see if you find them company," and the valet withdrew with a smile.

"I wish you both joy!" What was it that made those words ring in her ears as Nora woke that morning? Roy had said them. Did he really think that she would marry the man whom he had called his bitterest enemy?

He had warned her against his friendship, and yet what had she been doing day after day. Didn't Mr. Falconer consider her his friend? Hadn't he begun to call her by her Christian name, till she had grown accustomed to it, and forgotten to rebuke him? Wasn't his manner quite different to what it had been at first? And didn't he seem to grudge every hour that she spent away from him with his father? Only the day before, when she showed him a valuable diamond ring which the old man had given her instead of the quarter's salary—which she had refused—instead of being annoyed, he said, quietly, that he would give her much finer jewels if he only dared!

She jumped out of bed in alarm, wondering why she had been so blind; but long before breakfast was over, she told herself that she was a concited girl, and that Philip only thought of her as a child.

Her aunt used to warn her so persistently against conceit, and now there was not a soul to tell her of her faults; so, in the sweet simplicity of her nature, she wanted to keep a stricter watch over herself.

"Shall you be ready for a ride at half-past two?" Philip asked as he met her on her way to his father's room.

"Not to day, thanks!" she answered quietly.

"I have a headache."

"The very thing for a headache; it would cure it at once! I shall order Griselda!"

"Then you will have to ride her yourself," moving on.

He stepped in front of her, and looked her steadily in the face.

"What is the meaning of this?"

"I suppose I stayed up too late last night."

"You must ride with me," frowning.

"Somebody has set you against me!"

"Not a soul has been here!"

"And you still keep the compact never to write?" he asked suspiciously.

"Certainly! You trusted to my honour," very quietly.

After a few more remonstrances he let her go, finding that it was no use to detain her.

The slightest change in her manner made him uneasy, for now that he had made up his mind to marry the heiress of Mountfalcon he was desperately afraid lest she should slip through his fingers.

He was as deeply in debt as ever Roy had been, and unless he could hold out the hope of a rich marriage to his creditors they would be down upon him like a set of vultures. But there must be no slip between the cup and the lip.

Nora Macdonald must have the certainty of possessing Mountfalcon before she could become the wife of Philip Falconer.

He brooded over his plans as he wandered aimlessly about the park, with his hands in the pockets of his ulster, his head bent down to shelter his face from the wind.

Utterly selfish to the very core, he weighed his love and his self-interest in the same balance. Nora's beauty tempted him strangely, but his love for her would never grow into the hot, tempestuous passion he had felt for the Duchess of Yorkshire.

She was the only woman for whom in a fit of madness he could ever have died. There was no folly he could not have been capable of if she tempted him with a smile;

and yet how cruelly she threw him over, as if he had been no more than a dog she was tired of!

He went over all the bitterness of the past, though he knew it could do no good, as he tramped on under the still leafless trees, and trod the shivering primroses down under the soles of his boots, with as little thought as he would have trampled on some human heart.

Without any special object in view, he threw open the postern-gate and looked out into the road.

It was a very quiet road, by which few people ever passed.

In the distance he could hear the sound of a horse's hoofs, but in which direction they were coming he could not tell. Having looked out at the brown fields, which would soon be green with the promise of spring to the coming year, he turned round, and espied the wisp of straw tied on to the handle of the gate. It caught his eye at once. Was it a preconcerted signal? It might mean anything or nothing; but, anyhow, it was safer to pull it off.

With a sarcastic smile he pocketed it, went inside, and closed the gate behind him. It made so little impression upon him, however, that he quite forgot it, and pursued his way full of unquiet thoughts.

Meanwhile, Mr. Fred Sinclair reached the gate, and imagining all to be safe tied up his horse to the old thorn, and entered the park with the utmost audacity. Evidently, as there was no wisp of straw, Mr. Falconer was no longer on the premises, and if he could only chance to meet the fairy princess he was almost certain to find her alone. Luck favoured him as usual; for Nora, having got rid of her troublesome escort, came out to enjoy a solitary ramble. She was just thinking over Roy's words. "I could love you, child, with little bare feet, and a ragged frock," and telling herself, with a blush and a sigh, that all would come well at last, when she was nearly startled out of her wits by a young man suddenly springing out from behind a bush.

She started back with a low cry, but immediately recognised her mysterious visitor, as he implored her not to be frightened; and, seizing her hand, covered it with kisses before she could stop him.

"Mr. ——! Mr. ——! I don't know your name," she stammered; "but you mustn't do that!"

"You can't complain, when I treat you like a queen! Why did you let Captain Falconer monopolise you on Tuesday? I've been mad with jealousy ever since!" looking down into her eyes.

"He is an old friend," she said with dignity, though she was blushing like a sunset; "and I had not seen him for a long, long time."

"Don't see him again! I can't stand it!"

"I shan't," with a sigh. "But that's nothing to you."

"Isn't it?" with a queer look. "Do you know what some people say? That you are going to marry that old ruffian, Philip Falconer! On my honour, I believe there's a plot against you; but you won't be caught, will you?" bending over her entreatingly, his good-looking young face dangerously near her own.

"Why do you insult me?" drawing further away, and stamping her foot. "Everyone hates him! Everyone says he's the worst man that ever lived; and then you declare that I'm going to marry him! If Lady Clavering sent you to tell me this, tell her that I thought she would have known me better!" her lips trembling with a coming sob. "And—and you had better go back at once!"

"I never thought it; I swear I didn't!" he protested vehemently.

"Just as if I were the least bit afraid of being an old maid. I should like it. Men are detestable! and I hate them all!" she cried, passionately.

"I'm a boy, you know; a mere cub,"

he said, humbly, though he would have scouted the idea if suggested by anyone else. "And you might come back to the old stump, and talk to me for a minute."

She shook her head.

"What did you come for?"

"To see you! I—I really have thought of nothing else since I last came!"

"I wouldn't come so many miles only to talk nonsense!" she said, severely. "Last time you came you brought me news of all the people I liked best."

"But there's been so little time to see them all. The Princess have kept themselves horribly dark! Jack's away; Lady Clavering's little girl has got the measles—"

"Poor little thing! Is she ill?" with vivid interest.

"Not at all; but rather cross. She's bent on giving them to Roy Falconer. A kindness he could do without."

"Why did Jack go away?" not daring to mention the other name.

"Driven away by the church decorations—curates all over the place. One tacked on to each sister. Primroses in his soup, laurel-leaves in his tea-cup, a text on the drawing-room table. Couldn't stand it, so he fled."

"Poor Jack! If I could only see his dear old ugly face!" with a deep breath.

"Do you know, Miss Maclaren, I agree with you. I positively hate all the men you know!" edging a little nearer.

"Do you? But why?" looking up in surprise.

"Because you think of them all more than you think of me."

"But you are a stranger," blushing.

"A stranger!" in infinite scorn. "Is there any one of your friends who has haunted this place as I have, day after day, only for the chance of catching a glimpse?"

"Have you done that, really?" smiling at his earnestness.

"Yes; and you only laugh at it!" in an injured tone.

"No, I don't—indeed, I don't! It is very good of you to come, but I dare not stay any longer. Mr. Falconer is somewhere about," holding out her hand.

He took it and kissed it passionately.

"All the Falconers in the world shan't keep me from you, my darling! My darling!"

She snatched away her hand with a flash of indignation, but fled precipitately, without waiting for anything more.

Fred turned round to see the cause of her flight, and found himself face to face with the man he had just defied!

His first thought was for Nora. As for himself, he did not care a rap, but he knew that if he had brought the slightest shadow of blame on her lovely head he would never forgive himself as long as he lived.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Do you happen to know, sir, that you are trespassing?" said Philip Falconer, his eyes flashing with suppressed anger.

In an instant Fred Sinclair had formed his plan.

He raised his hat, with a grave bow,

"Mr. Falconer, I believe?"

"I am Philip Falconer, and this is Lord Montfalcon's private park, from which the public are rigidly excluded," sternly, as if he meant to add, "and I'll stand none of your nonsense!"

Fred smiled.

"I've heard of the difficulties of getting into Bluebeard's Tower, as we call it; but when a lady chose me for her messenger I had to face them."

"A messenger to whom?" his grey eyes fixed like a gimlet on to the young face, that looked so sweetly innocent.

"To you, my dear sir. The Duchess of Yorkshire would be glad if you could come and speak to her at once."

"The Duchess wants me? Impossible!" flushing like a girl. "You must have made a mistake!"

"No mistake at all. I've a card outside. Can you come at once?"

"Of course I can come!" his pulses quickening. "But, upon my soul, I can scarcely believe it!"

"I have delivered my message; but if you don't feel inclined to come—" shrugging his shoulders.

"Of course I'm inclined to come. I would go anywhere to please her!" emphatically.

"Do you happen to have the key of the gate in your pocket? Then we needn't perform acrobatic feats over the wall," walking quietly towards the postern.

"You don't mean to say that you climbed it?" running his eye critically over Sinclair's slight figure.

"I'm not quite small enough to get through the keyhole!" he said, evasively.

Two minutes later he was carrying off his rival in triumph, and only wishing that he could leave himself behind; not guessing that crime was following the man by his side, and that he was bringing death and destruction to the house of his friends.

As soon as they reached the Castle Fred hurried to the Duchess, and told her what he had done.

It had been agreed upon between them that he might give any message he chose to invent on the spur of the moment, if he came into contact with Philip Falconer; and she laughed softly as she went to receive him in her own especial boudoir.

It was a beautiful room, hung with priceless tapestries, adorned with bric-a-brac from every corner of the globe, and scented with the perfume of the sweetest flowers.

The Duchess was dressed in violet velvet, which set off her beauty to the greatest advantage; and a rose-tinted shade over the lamp gave the softest of pinks to her cheeks.

She put on her most gracious manner, and smiled on her guest as she had not smiled for years.

She would not own that she had any special object in sending for him; only it seemed so long since she had seen an old friend.

And as Philip lounged on a low seat, looking up into the beautiful face, which had been the dream of his life, the subtle sweetness of the whole scene mounted like the fumes of champagne, to his brain; and, intoxicated by a strange excitement, he felt as if he were no longer responsible for his actions.

One beautiful hand, faultless in shape, white as Parian marble, and adorned with rings of flashing diamonds, hung down by her side.

Drawn on by an irresistible impulse, he bent his head and touched it softly with his lips.

Horrified at his own presumption, he expected a haughty rebuke; but the Duchess only shook her head gently, and said, with an indulgent smile,

"You forget that I am no longer Marion Hawkshaw!"

"Tell me," and his voice shook with intense agitation, "if you were free, if it weren't for that helpless invalid in the west wing, would there be any chance for me?"

The Duchess looked at him from under her long lashes, and, finding him answer so willingly to her touch, knew that if she chose to draw him on she might prevent his marriage with Nora Maclaren, and keep him from cheating Roy out of his birthright.

"But there is an invalid in the west wing," she said, softly, "and so long as there is, I have to forego anything warmer than a casual friendship."

"Oh! but give me hope!" a ring in his voice as if the cry came from his very heart.

"I have none myself," very low, as she thought of the irksome chain whose links were heavy as tons of lead.

"I have loved you so many years," his eyes fixed like a hungry dog's upon her face.

"Ah, but I can't flatter myself that you

had been faithful," with a reproachful smile. "A pair of blue eyes have stolen—"

"Never I swear they never did! Do you imagine for a moment," carried out of himself by the overwhelming charm of her beauty, "that I could love a piece of rural innocence like the little Macdonald, when I had once known Marion Hawkshaw?"

The Duchess laughed softly. "You show me very plainly that you don't consider innocence my attribute; but as to that little girl, I fully believe that one day she will be Mrs. Falconer."

Philip shook his head, as if such an idea had never entered it.

"You don't know me. I'm faithful as a dog."

"But a dog is bought and sold," leaning forward to look into his face.

"It would be no good trying to sell me. I should come back to my old mistress."

"Not you, my dear friend. At this very moment the new love is calling you home, and you are on thorns lest you should be too late to dine with her."

"Am I? Try me! Ask me to stay!"

"I do ask you, but you will make some excuse," watching him intently with half-closed eyes.

"I should like to make an excuse to stay here for ever," he said, hotly, inwardly annoyed, because it had flashed across him the moment, before that Nora would be wondering at his absence.

"What a penance it would be for you!"

"If that were a penance, what would be a pleasure?" his eyes glowing.

"My poor Philip, how I have misjudged you! I thought you had forgotten me long ago!" leaning back against the golden cushion, with a smile in her dark eyes, and hanging about her sweetly-curved lips.

"Forgotten you?" a vivid light in his grey eyes. "I should have been a better man if I only could."

And so she led him on without remorse, playing on the withered remnants of a passion that had been the truest love of his dissolute life.

When she met a shocked look in Lady Alice's eyes, she excused herself to herself, on the ground of her object.

She cared not a straw what became of Philip Falconer so long as she could save Roy's inheritance, though the latter, true to his resolution, had refused to stay longer than the Sunday, and had angered her bitterly by returning to Clavering Chase early on Monday morning.

Being, as she always was, at war with her better self, it gave her a sort of fierce delight to play upon a nature that was worse than her own.

Philip Falconer interested her because there were depths in his character that she had never reached, and she took a childish delight in exciting him, because he was generally so cold and calm.

But the Duchess would have stopped in a fright if she could have known the wild whirlpool of passion that she had roused.

Philip Falconer, usually so composed and self-collected, under the influence of this new excitement became a totally different man; that is to say, his other self, which was always latent, though lost in the background, came prominently to the fore.

He scarcely knew what he said or did at dinner; he was scarcely conscious of anyone's presence—except the Duchess's.

The champagne was strong, and he drank more than usual; but it was a woman's unexpected gaiety that made him lose his head, and fired his worst impulses.

If that useless leg the Duke of Honiton were only dead—that was the thought that consumed him, as he sat beside the helpless woman who was still the wife of the useless leg, though he had scarcely mental power enough to claim her as his own.

He could hardly be called a living, sentient human-being; and yet because of a few words said in a church he was her husband, and

kept all others off the prize which he could not value.

It was monstrous—perfectly monstrous! Oh, if she were only free. The thought madened him, as he bent over the tuberose which she had taken from her dress.

The flower is the emblem of passion, and the perfume seemed to bewilder his brain.

The ladies disappeared, and for a few minutes Philip Falconer was left alone in the dining-room, whilst Fred Sinclair went to ask the Duchess about the dog-cart, and fetch some superlative cigars.

Soily he stole from the room, and crossed the hall with the stealthy tread of a burglar. He knew his way about, for he had often stayed in the Castle, and he had made apparently careless, but really minute inquiries as to the exact position of the Duke's suite of rooms.

There was nobody to watch him, for the servants were all at supper in quite a different direction; and very few people at any time of the day were ever in the west wing, as that was entirely appropriated to the master of the house, though he could only make use of two rooms in it.

"Where are you?" cried Fred, who reached the dining-room to find it quite empty.

"Here, putting on my coat, to say time," came Falconer's voice from the hall.

"There's no hurry; the cart isn't round yet, and these cigars are prime."

Philip came in with his coat on, as it was obviously useless to wait in the hall. Fred pushed him the box of cigars.

"Give me a light; my box is empty."

Sinclair threw him a pretty little silver match-box, the gift of one of his many loves, and watched him light his cigar with the shakiest of fingers. The match went up and down, just above or below or half-an-inch below, but never reached the tip of his cigar—a second or third match had to be used.

"It is beastly cold, isn't it?" he said, sympathetically. "Come, and give yourself a warm by the fire."

Philip went and stood on the hearth-rug, with his white face turned to the blaze. Fred could not make out what had changed him so during the last few minutes, but he could scarcely get a word out of him, and he was thankful when the dog-cart was announced.

"Seems as if the house hadn't got a master," he said, as he followed Philip out into the hall. "Poor old fellow! Some day I hope he will be able to do the honours to his guests once again!"

Falconer started, looking at him with a strange expression of the eyes.

"We all hope so, don't we? and it's so very likely, isn't it?" he said, incoherently, and then he climbed into the dog-cart, forgetting to shake hands.

Fred shrugged his shoulders.

"Queer old codger; wish I hadn't wasted one of Honiton's best weeds on him. Don't believe he knew it from a cabbage stalk."

Nora sat at the piano in the furthest drawing-room, where the fire had always been lighted of late by Philip Falconer's orders. He preferred it to the music-room, as being safely beyond the reach of his father's ears.

All the intermediate doors were shut instead of standing wide open, as was ever the case when the Viscount was not confined to his bed, and the room looked tolerably cheerful, with the firelight playing on the amber satin coverings.

She was singing that dear old favorite "For Ever," and putting her whole heart into the passionate words of the chorus, when Philip came into the room.

She looked up with a little nod, and even in that cursory glance, noticed that he was strangely white.

"It might be December," he said gruffly, and piled some more logs on to the fire. "Go on singing! Don't let me interrupt you."

Well he knew that she was thinking of Roy,

whilst his own thoughts were full of the Duchess, as that passionate "For ever and ever" rang through the room.

Was it a dream, or did she really mean that she would love him if she were only free? The withered tuberose had lost none of its fragrance; but all his exhilaration of spirit had gone from him.

He pulled an arm-chair close to the fire, rested his elbows on his knees, his face on his hands, and fixing his eyes on the glowing embers, saw strange visions in the heart of the coals.

What a splendid triumph it would be over Roy, to become the husband of the Duchess of Yorkshire! The mere possibility thrilled him powerfully, but the blood no longer ran riot in his veins. It was as if it had been frozen in its very source.

That girl at the piano, what did she know of love and its fierce temptations? She would have a sentimental feeling for some hero of her imagination, but she would never go so far as to break a law in order to satisfy it.

No, she would go along the beaten track of all the proprieties, and never know the utter madness of a passion such as he called worthy of the name!

"Marion! Marion!" the cry seemed to come from the bottom of his heart, "where have you led me?"

Presently he got up from his chair, opened the shutter and looked out.

"I thought this confounded wind would have brought snow," he said, as if in explanation, and went back to his seat, leaving the shutter still open.

"It is a terrible wind," she said, looking over her shoulder. "If a house were on fire in such a gale as this I don't suppose there would be the smallest chance of saving it!"

He did not answer; but, as if some spirit of restlessness possessed him, kept every now and then going to the window and looking out.

Nora wondered why he was so glum, but went on playing softly to herself. They were both very quiet, Philip still sitting by the fire, which was blazing half-way up the chimney, hiding his weird, miserable-looking face in his hands. Nora gently playing one of the "Lieder ohne Worte," when they were both somewhat startled by the sudden opening of the door.

Nora let her music fall on to the floor as she was turning over the page; but as to Falconer he started from his seat with an expression of abject terror, and absolutely clung to the mantelpiece as if his legs refused to support him.

In the doorway stood the gaunt form of Lord Montraloon, arrayed in a tattered Indian dressing-gown, with large hollow eyes fixed on his son!

CHAPTER XXIV.

Lord MOUNTFALCON raised his right arm and pointed his lean forefinger at his son's shrinking form.

"Out of my house, this moment, sir!" he said, in a husky voice. "You've no right to be here!"

Philip made a violent effort to pull himself together. He let go of the mantelpiece, and threw back his head; but his eyes could not meet his father's piercing gaze.

"I have a right to stay here—it is my home!" he said, with an attempt at defiance.

Nora wondered at the sudden fit of terror that had possessed him at the opening of the door. He had evidently been afraid of something much more terrible than his father's sudden appearance, and though he had partially recovered from it the effects of his fear were still to be seen in his white cheeks and quivering lips.

"It is no longer your home—you have forfeited it," said the Viscount, sternly, as he advanced with uncertain steps towards the middle of the room.

He was still very weak from his illness, and could scarcely walk without support. Nora ran forward to help him, and he placed his

thin hand on her shoulder, little thinking at the moment of the striking picture they made of youth and old age—the young girl in the bloom of her vigour and beauty, the old man only a wreck of the beauty and the vigour, and the manly strength, which had once been his in the past.

"Shall I tell her what you are?" he asked, slowly, scarcely able from his own knowledge to measure the whole proportion of the menace contained in the words.

"Miss Macdonald knows me as I am," Philip said, but without raising his eyes, "not as you would blacken me!"

"Does she know you for a scoundrel? Does she know you for a thief?" each word dragged out with a malignant emphasis. "Ay, and for all I know to the contrary, a murderer as well!"

Falcooner's face was white enough at the beginning; now an awful change came over it, and it became quite grey, and his teeth chattered.

"It's a lie!—an infernal lie!" he cried, but with unsteady voice. "He's mad!—mad!—mad!" and catching hold of Nora's arm, he tried to pull her away from his father.

Lord Mountaloon thrust him back with fierce contempt.

"You are not fit to touch her. She would think you soiled her if she only knew. Go, and my bitterest curse go with you!"

"Don't!" cried Nora, clasping her hands. "Don't send him away with a curse. You may never see him again!"

"Pray don't disturb yourself," cried Philip, his eyes blazing with sudden hatred. "The curse of a lunatic—what is it worth?"

"Hush, he's your father! Oh, Lord Mountaloon!" looking into his face with imploring eyes. "Whatever has he done? Say that you'll forgive him before he goes?"

"I'll forgive him, child, when he remembers that he was born a Falcooner—and therefore a gentleman—and that will be a long day hence. It is the bitterest shame of my life that I must call that man my son," and utterly exhausted, he sank down into a chair.

Philip walked slowly to the door as if hoping to be called back, but nothing was further from his father's thoughts.

"Look!" cried Nora, as a sudden flush of crimson shot up into the cold grey sky. "Some place is on fire. Oh, I hope no one will be hurt!"

Philip staggered back with a livid face, threw up his arms and rushed out, Nora watching him with a thrill of horror for which she could never account.

Venables came in quietly by the open door from the drawing-room.

"Excuse me, my lord, but the Castle is on fire. Shall we send the fire-engine?"

"No, there are plenty of others. Why should I send mine?" leaning his withered hands on his gold-headed stick.

"Think of the poor Duke! so ill, so helpless, with no one to care whether he lives or dies!"

"Would anyone think of me?" his eyes involuntarily softening as they rested on the sweet face, so full of earnest pleading.

"Yes, I'd drag you out, and Venables would help me."

"No, you would save yourselves first, and think of me too late—that's the way of the world!"

"Indeed—indeed, we shouldn't; but, dear Lord Falcooner," kneeling down by his side and putting her face close to his, "do send the engine, or else if anything happens to the poor Duke—you would be sorry!"

"Pack of rubbish! If all the dukes in the country died it wouldn't make me turn a hair. But send the engine if you like—it's nothing to me!"

Venables left the room to give the requisite orders.

(To be continued.)

THE GAY YOUNG GIRLS.

—:—

O THE gay young girls! how they brighten Our homes; and our hearts how they lighten

Of the burdens that they bear

In the days of anxious care,

When we hear their merry laughter ringing out upon the air.

O the gay young girls are so jolly,

So free from the least melancholy,

We love to have them near,

To keep us in good cheer,

When troubles gather thickly, and the days are dark and drear.

'Tis the gay young girls who delight us, Where pleasures and pastimes invite us,

For they're ready to begin

The fun, and enter in

The frolics and the sports to help along the merry din.

O the gay young girls we remember, Ere life was so near its December,

Were a happy-hearted throng,

Full of laughter and of song, With whom the dismal shadows had no chance to linger long.

Let the gay young girls be as jolly As they can; we will laugh at their folly;

For too soon they leave our hearth,

And subdue their noisy mirth;

And the home that is without them is the dullest place on earth.

J. P.

CINDERELLA'S MARRIAGE.

—o—

CHAPTER I.

A WAIF FROM THE RIVER.

The young May moon—sacred to poets and lovers!—was shining down on a very pretty and peaceful scene on the banks of the Thames, somewhere above Richmond. The meadows on either side, bathed in the moonlight, and drenched with heavy dew, gave a pastoral air to the landscape, and helped to persuade one that London and its suburbs were a long way off, and this was the veritable country—although, not so far away, the many lights of Richmond, dotted at frequent, if irregular, intervals, rather tended to spoil the illusion.

It was just after high water, and the river had filled its banks almost to overflowing. Its broad, calm tide, bitten into tiny ripples by the breeze, looked like a volume of molten silver, as it swept majestically on its way to the great unknown sea. From the hedges, powdered over with the white bloom of hawthorn flowers, came a vague perfume of almonds, and in a thicket close at hand, a nightingale was singing—his long, drawn-out notes lingering on the air, with a plaintive sweetness that inclined one to melancholy.

For the rest the silence was undisturbed. It was after nine o'clock, and the river was deserted—these May evenings were rather cold for lingering on the water, even under the favourable conditions of fine weather and moonlight. Indeed, a slight girl figure, wearing a battered old hat, and a thin black shawl, drawn tightly over her angular shoulders, seemed to be the only human creature anywhere about.

She was standing under the shadow of some trees, her eyes fixed in a painfully strained gaze on the water. Her hands were crossed over her breast—small, well-shaped hands they were, but coarse and rough, apparently from hard work. She shivered now and again, either from cold, or from some inward excitement—perhaps it was a mingling of both.

"I wish it did not look so cold," she murmured, half aloud. "I wonder how long it will take? People say that in the moments of drowning, all one's sins come up before one in a single instant. Will mine, I wonder?"

She fell to thinking, trying to recall what her sins had been, and blaming herself because she could not think of very many to tax her self with. Poor child! She had been, all her life long, more sinned against than sinning.

She took three steps forward, then paused, while a shudder stirred her delicate frame from head to foot. Life had not shown itself to her under very favourable auspices, and yet the purely human instinct within her revolted against giving it up. The river—lovely as it looked—was, in reality, cold, cruel, merciless; but, all the same, it meant relief from enemies that were still colder, still crueller, still more merciless. Yes, she must not draw back now; she had resolved to die, and since only in death was it possible to find peace, she would keep her resolve.

She held up her hands to Heaven. She had not been taught to pray; she was ignorant and untutored as some savage out of the backwoods, but her soul groped blindly in its darkness towards some kindly power to which, in this awful moment, she commanded it. A minute later there was a splash in the water, the eddies circled round and round in widening rings, and then the silence was undisturbed again, save for the song of the nightingales, that during all this while had been unbroken.

A little while afterwards a boat drifted out of the shadow into the moonlight, dropping quietly down with the tide.

Its sole occupant was a young man of four or five-and-twenty—a handsome fellow, with short-cut fair hair, and reckless blue eyes.

There was something military in his appearance that at once suggested his profession; and, indeed, a man with such a splendid physique as his was clearly cut out by Nature for a soldier.

So tall and broad was he that he irresistibly reminded one of the Vikings of old, when, brave, resolute and adventurous, they sailed from their Northern seas, carrying victory with them wherever they went.

He was smoking a cigar, while the souls balanced themselves in the rowlocks; but quite suddenly he threw the cigar away, and peered out into the darkness of the shadow thrown by the bank on the water.

He fancied he had seen something rise for a moment to the surface, and then disappear again as quickly as it had come.

"It looked like a human being—whether man or woman Heaven knows!" he said to himself; and he took the souls in his hands, and pulled a few rapid strokes towards the left bank.

As he neared it, a black object floating on the water attracted his gaze, and he picked it up, holding it a little distance away with a certain fastidious distaste for such a dirty and shabby article as it proved to be.

It was a straw hat, bent into a very caricature of its original shape, and trimmed with a rusty black ribbon, and the skeleton of a feather in the last stages of dilapidation.

Nevertheless, it convinced Bertie Carbonell that his first idea had been correct, and that it really had been a human being whom he had seen appearing for a moment above the water—the woman, probably, to whom this hat belonged.

The young man had many faults, but cowardice was not one of them. The fact that a fellow-creature's life was at stake put every other consideration on one side; and, without a moment's hesitation, he threw off his coat and waistcoat, and plunged into the water—although, for aught he could tell, it might already be too late for him to do more than drag a dead body to shore.

Still he thought not. The hat was not very wet, thus proving that it could not have

been in the water so very long. And, besides, on consideration he fancied he remembered hearing a splash a few minutes ago, to which, however, he had not attached any importance, for since it was not accompanied by a cry, it might as easily have been a dog as anything else.

He was a strong and expert swimmer, used to the water from earliest boyhood, and with eye and ear trained to almost preternatural quickness.

If the woman were anywhere near he was pretty sure of finding her; but he knew that, in such a case as this, everything depended on promptitude. One minute, more or less, made all the difference in the world.

The moonlight helped him very considerably; in effect, it was almost as light as day. But the shadows were denser, and therein lay his difficulty.

He kept pretty close to the bank, and below the spot where he had seen what he imagined to be the woman's head appear; for as the tide was beginning to run pretty fast, it followed as a necessity that it would carry her down with it.

Yes, there the object was again—dark and indistinct, it is true, and some little distance ahead of him.

A few rapid strokes, and, helped by the tide, he was abreast of it; and then he saw for a certainty that it was a girl.

The difficulty was over now. He threw his left arm round her, and easily reached the bank, and scrambled on to the towing-path, where he laid her gently down, and kneeling by her side, put back the thick mass of loosened hair that had strayed over her face.

The face itself—white and still in the moon-shine—touched him with a curious sense of pathos. It was that of a very young girl—a child, in fact; and though not beautiful, it still had a sort of refined delicacy that was surprising under the circumstances. The features were clear and well-cut, the eyelashes dark, and of wonderful thickness—as was also the hair that lay in wet strands over her shoulders. But the stillness and rigidity of her attitude alarmed Carbonnell—it looked so terribly like death!

Luckily this was not his first experience of reviving a drowning person, and he knew exactly what to do. Fortunately, too, he carried some brandy in a little silver flask in his coat-pocket; but his coat was in the boat, which, left to itself had drifted to the bank, and, by great good luck, had got caught in some low-growing bushes. Carbonnell secured it by the painter, took away the flask, and forced some of its contents down the unconscious girl's throat; then he paused in indecision as to his next step.

What should he do with the girl? There were no houses near, and there was no one whom he could call to his assistance. He himself had been living in a house-boat for the last ten days, and that was moored some little distance up-stream. There was not a soul in it, for his man had gone to London to bring down certain necessaries, and it was quite likely he might not return until the next morning.

It seemed to the young man that the only thing possible was to take this poor drowning creature to his own dwelling, and see there if he could not resuscitate her by means of warmth. The position was not a pleasant one—in point of fact, it was as awkward as it could well be; but there was no time to think of conventionalities, and if the girl's life was to be saved, the necessary steps must be taken at once.

Carbonnell lifted her in his arms—even in her drenched garments she was not very heavy—and carried her as quickly as he could along the bank until he came to the house-boat. Then, having let himself in, he bore her to the living room, where a fire was burning, and placed her on a couch in front of it. After that, he put some blankets to warm, and returning, knelt by the girl's side, and began awkwardly enough to take off her shawl and

her dripping skirt; then he wrapped the blankets round her, moved her still closer to the fire, and poured another dose of brandy down her throat.

After awhile certain signs of animation appeared. A faint tinge of red came in her cheeks; her lips lost their blue pallor, and she opened her eyes. Carbonnell, seeing that his efforts had been successful, drew back, lest the sight of a stranger might alarm her, but through an opposite glass he was enabled to watch her.

At first she lay perfectly still, her large dark eyes roving bewilderedly about. Presently she half raised herself on her elbow, and looked round.

The room she was in was low, and not very large; it was furnished comfortably, even luxuriously.

The walls were draped round with some bright Eastern fabric, matching the thick, soft rugs on the floor; and on the mantel-piece were three photographs of a lady, set in tasteful and expensive frames.

That the quarters were those of a bachelor was testified by the many pipe-racks, cigar-boxes, and litter of newspapers that abounded. Nevertheless, taken altogether, the room was charmingly bright and pretty.

To the desolate girl who found herself there it seemed a veritable fairy-land; and when Carbonnell finally stepped forward, she fancied he must be a fairy prince—the presiding genius of this delightful place, by whose agency she had been brought there.

"Well," he said, speaking with the kindly condescension he would have used towards a child, "how do you feel now?"

She did not reply. In effect, she could not collect her ideas sufficiently to find the words she wanted, for she was still in a sort of bewildered dream, not knowing anything except that a delicious sense of warmth and general well-being had taken possession of her.

Her large, dark eyes gazed up at Carbonnell, with something of the pathos of a dumb animal, when it looks the affection and gratitude it cannot put into language.

He smiled down reassuringly into her pinched face, and just touched with his own, the hand that hung at her side.

"Lie still for a bit, and don't trouble about thinking," he said, cheerily. "You are all right; let that content you."

It did content her. Indeed, it seemed to her that life—or death, for she was not quite sure which this was—could offer nothing better than the dream-like feeling of happiness that filled her being, especially when Carbonnell, drawing up a wicker-chair close to the fire, sat down in it; and, after filling a pipe with thoughtful deliberation, began smoking.

She watched him intently, unconscious in her perfect innocence that there was anything unusual in such a close scrutiny, and feeling a strange, tranquil delight in the mere sense of his presence.

As for the young man, he was far from experiencing a similar serenity.

In point of fact, this adventure perplexed him—annoyed him. He somehow felt that it was destined to have serious consequences; and, though he ridiculed himself for the idea, he was yet powerless to shake it off. And so they sat in silence for about an hour, the room filled meanwhile with the mingled shadow of the firelight and the moonlight, and the rippling of the water round the sides of the boat, keeping up a sort of accompaniment to their thoughts.

Then the clock on a bracket above the fireplace struck twelve, and the sound seemed to recall to Carbonnell, the necessity of coming to some understanding with his unwelcome guest.

He knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and turned towards her.

"Do you feel well enough to talk now?" he said, "because there are one or two points that you might like to have explained to you."

She looked a little puzzled, as if she did not quite take in his meaning; but after a moment she answered gently,—

"Yes, I think I am well enough to talk."

Her voice matched her face; it was quiet, musical, and clear. Still, it was not the voice of an educated person, as Carbonnell's ear was swift to assure him.

"Don't you want to know where you are?" he asked, after a slight pause, that he felt to be a little awkward.

"I had not thought about it," she returned, simply. "I supposed you would tell me when you wished me to know."

He was rather staggered by this implicit faith, which, at first, he was inclined to attribute to art rather than innocence. One glance, however, into her lucent, truthful eyes undecceived him. Every moment he grew more and more puzzled as to how she came into the water. His first idea had been that she had thrown herself in, as in any other case he would have heard her cries for help, but now he dismissed the notion as absurd.

"You are in a house-boat called the *Lotus*, and it belongs to me. My name is Hubert Carbonnell," he said, "and I was happy enough to get you out of the water when you fell in."

"I did not fall in," she told him, quite tranquilly. "I threw myself in."

"You—threw—yourself—in!"

"Yes. I thought the matter over a good deal, and it seemed to me the best thing I could do."

Bertie was unfeignedly shocked. To hear such a child speak of suicide in this calm, matter-of-fact way, was inexpressibly repulsive to him. He drew back with a movement of disgust, which the girl instantly noticed.

"Do you think I was wrong?" she asked, timidly.

"Wrong! Of course you were. Don't you know that self-murder is a dreadful crime?"

"Is it? No, I did not know."

She was looking at him wistfully with those sad, serious eyes, that were heavy with a weight of woe, terrible to think of in such a young creature. The gaze made him uncomfortable.

"Circumstances alter cases, of course," he said, with a view of consoling her; "and perhaps the particular circumstances of your case, make your crime less awful, than it would otherwise be. Nevertheless," he added, with conviction, "there can be no excuse for it."

She let her eyes fall, and two heavy tears ran down her cheeks. His rebuke made her attempt appear before her in its true light, and although she wished to excuse herself she had not the courage to do so.

"What will your friends think of you when they know what you tried to do?" he went on, still with the sternness that he felt it incumbent upon him to assume.

"Friends! she repeated, laughing scornfully. "Why, I have no friends!"

"Your relations, then?"

"They would be glad," she responded, slowly.

Carbonnell looked amazed.

"Are your parents alive?" he asked, abruptly.

"No—they must have died when I was a baby, for I don't remember either of them."

"With whom do you live, then?"

"With my uncle and aunt."

"Don't they treat you well?"

For answer, she rose from the couch, and shook herself free from the blankets that, until this moment, had enveloped her. When she stood upright he saw how painfully thin she was, and he could hardly help smiling at the grotesque figure she presented, in her short petticoat and threadbare bodice.

"Look!" she said, rolling up her sleeves, and showing red, raw-looking scars on her slender arms. "These are what my aunt gives me, and the bruises on my shoulders are even worse. My uncle does not beat me, but he starves me."

"Good heavens!" cried Carboull, turning away with a shudder. "What brutes!"

"I tried to do my duty—indeed, I did my best, but I could not please Aunt Maria," the girl continued, sorrowfully, as she pulled down her sleeves again. "I have borne it for a long while, but this morning I made up my mind I could bear it no longer, and I thought Heaven would forgive me for leaving home. I have heard people say drowning is the easiest death—the soonest over; but, somehow, I felt I could not throw myself into the water in London—it is so black, and horrible, so I walked down here. I had been at Richmond once before, and I thought I should like to see it again. Indeed, indeed I am sorry if I have done wrong!"

These last words were very pitifully spoken. By a great effort she kept back the tears that were ready to fall, and Carboull—who had a man's horror of tears—applauded her efforts.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Lucinda."

"Lucinda—what?"

"My uncle's name is Revel," she said. "I suppose it is mine too."

"And where does your uncle live?"

"At Rotherhithe—at a house standing by itself near the water."

Carboull's acquaintance with Rotherhithe was limited, so he did not recognise the description, lucid as the girl seemed to imagine it. He was looking at her in puzzled wonderment, and pulling hard at his mustache—a trick of his when he was uncertain, or annoyed.

"Have you no other relations beyond this uncle and aunt?"

"Sue shook her head.

"Not that I know of."

The young man leaned his elbow on the mantelpiece, and stared meditatively into the fire. He felt as if a sudden weight of responsibility had been thrust upon him, and the burden was an unwelcome one. True, he was interested in the girl and her sad story; he had saved her life, and it gave her a sort of claim upon him, but the present was an emergency which he found it difficult to face.

"I intended taking you back to your friends as soon as you were sufficiently recovered to go," he said, at length, and then he stopped—pulled up by the despairing supplication of Lucinda's face.

"Oh, don't send me back, please—please don't send me back!" she cried, stretching out her hands in a gesture of wild appeal, "Kill me rather than send me back!"

"But what can I do with you?" he queried, in a sort of desperation.

This was a question which she was not prepared to answer. The problem of life was one which had pressed hardly upon her, but which she had been unable to solve. For a few minutes neither spoke. Lucinda was crouching near the fire, holding her thin, work-hardened hands to the blaze, while he, from his stately height, looked down at her in perplexity and indecision.

He could not make up his mind to force her to return to a house like the one he described; on the other hand, her sex and her youth made it well-nigh impossible for her to remain under his protection, without evil being spoken both of her and of him. He felt that no man had ever been placed in a more awkward dilemma.

"You see," he said, presently, in an argumentative tone, "I really have no right to take you away from your natural guardians; and if I did, what could I do with you?"

"I could work," she responded, eagerly. "I could be a servant, you know. I should not mind that—indeed, I shouldn't mind the hardest work in the world, if only I could get away from Aunt Maria!"

At this moment the little clock again struck one stroke this time. Captain Carboull determined to think the matter over, and decide in the morning what he could do.

It was now too late to send Lucinda any-

where, and he could hardly, for the sake of humanity, leave her alone in the houseboat.

"Lie down on the couch and go to sleep," he said to her finally; and then he wished her good-night, and returned to his own room, where he threw himself on the bed, dressed as he was, and smoked a meditative pipe, while he thought over various plans for her future.

CHAPTER II.

BERTIE DECIDES.

In the morning, when Bertie went into the living room of the house-boat, he found Lucinda must have been up some time, for the fire was lighted, the hearth was rubbed bright, and the room generally tidied up in such a manner as made him hardly recognise it.

The girl herself looked thinner, paler, and more pitiful than ever in the clear light of the early dawn; but her face lighted up as she saw her rescuer, and she took his hand and kissed it as humbly as if he had been a King, and she his lowliest subject.

Bertie flushed rather uncomfortably—still the action touched him all the same. He produced from the seaport the necessities for breakfast; and told her she was to share the meal with him; but this Lucinda utterly refused to do. She would wait, she said, until after he had finished, and nothing would induce her to alter her resolution.

Accordingly, when he had drunk a cup of coffee and eaten some toast, Bertie left the house-boat, and went for a walk on the banks of the river.

When he returned Lucinda was still busy, dusting with a feather-duster that she had hunted up.

"Sit down for a few minutes," he said, "I want to talk to you." Then, as she obeyed, he continued, "I have been thinking over your story, and I have decided not to send you back to your relations. If they are the wretched you describe they won't mourn your loss, and they may as well think you dead as not. I have nobody in England to whom I can send you, so I shall take you to a school in Belgium, kept by an old governess of my cousin's, who will, I am sure, be good to you; and if you try to learn you may become a governess yourself some day. What do you think of my plan?"

She did not speak, for the simple reason that her heart was too full for words; but her large dark eyes were eloquent enough for anything.

"Of course I must take you as soon as possible," he went on, "so I shall go up to London to-day and make the necessary arrangements for leaving England to-night. In the meantime you must stay here until evening, when I will come and fetch you. Do you understand?"

"Oh!" she exclaimed, with a great burst of sobs, "you are too good to me—you are too kind and good! How can I ever thank you?"

"By not trying to do so," he returned, rather brusquely, and rising as he spoke. "I shall start at once, and when my servant comes back you must give him this note, which will explain your presence here."

He handed her the note, which he had hastily scribbled in pencil on a sheet of paper torn from his pocket-book; and five minutes later he was in the small boat, putting down the river to Richmond, from whence he took the train to Waterloo.

He was very thoughtful during his journey; nevertheless, he did not regret the decision he had come to. He was rich enough not to mind the expenses of the girl's education, and surely he could not make a better use of his money, than by supplying her with the means of making an honest livelihood for herself in the days to come!

First of all he went to his chambers in the Albany, glanced through balesters, and wrote one or two, then he took a hansom, and drove to the Army and Navy Stores—for it had struck him that Lucinda would require some

clothes before she went away, and there was no one to get them but himself. The task was not so difficult as it might have been. He went up to one of the assistants—a kindly looking young woman—and told her he wanted a complete outfit for a girl of fifteen, who was going to school, and left it to her to select the different articles. He himself chose a large fur-lined cloak, a neat felt travelling hat, a ready-made black woolen dress, and some boots and gloves, all of which he had packed in a Gladstone bag, and took away with him. The rest of the things were to be sent in a trunk to Charing Cross Station, and left at the cloak-room there.

It was six o'clock when he got back to the house-boat, where he found his valet—a quiet bold-headed man of about forty-five, named Little, who seemed to have outlived all capacity for surprise, and on seeing his master, remarked quietly,

"The young person is in the sitting room, sir! She has not moved out since she gave me your note."

"All right, Little. Pack up a few things for me—enough to last three days—as quickly as you can. I want to leave Charing Cross at eight o'clock."

Then Bertie went in to Lucinda, gave her a few directions, and told her to lose no time in attire herself in the articles she would find in the bag—a request which she obeyed directly—he left her.

Ten minutes later she came out, and the young man was amazed at the metamorphosis which such a short time had effected. She had plaited her hair in two long Marguerite plaits, which hung down her back far below her waist; the dress fitted her fairly well; the hat suited her to perfection, and the fur-lined cloak, though rather unsuited for her youthful years, completed her costume very satisfactorily. The boots and gloves were both too large, still they would pass muster; and Bertie confessed to himself that there was now nothing in the appearance of this friendless waif to distinguish her from any other young lady on her way to school.

The girl herself showed a naive delight in her new clothes that Carboull found very amusing. Two or three times he caught her looking over her shoulder, to see how her cloak hung, and her admiration for the many buttons on her gloves was very openly expressed. Some innate good taste told her that her benefactor did not care for too many thanks—but it was a severe trial to her to restrain them!

There was no time to be lost if they would catch the night-express, by which Bertie purposed going; so they made all haste to Richmond, and half-an-hour later were at Waterloo station. Then Bertie took a hansom, to the no-go delight of Lucinda, who had never been in such a vehicle before, and who expressed her pleasure in little gasps of childish wonder.

As a matter of fact she was far more at her ease than the young soldier. He was in mortal fear lest any of his numerous acquaintances should see him. It even struck him that it would be extremely awkward if the Uncle or "Aunt Maria" she had spoken of should chance to pass and recognise Lucinda, as a "scare" would pretty sure to be the result; and Bertie detested "scare."

The girl, on her part, felt such a supreme and implicit faith in her rescuer, that the mere sense of his presence brought with it an assurance of safety, which made her ready to bid defiance to all the rest of the world.

Charing-cross was safely reached, Lucinda was encased in one corner of a first-class carriage, and Carboull, having seen to the luggage, came back laden with newspapers and magazines.

He had just taken his seat, and was about closing the door, when a lady's voice exclaimed,

"Why, Bertie, where are you off to?"

As she spoke the lady advanced to the door of the compartment, and the light of the

lamp fell full upon her face—the most beautiful face Lucinda had ever dreamed of!

She was not unlike Bertie himself, being tall, fair, and blue-eyed, with the finely-developed figure of a young Juno; and, added to this, she was richly dressed in a green velvet travelling costume, which became her admirably.

Close behind her stood a footman carrying some rugs, and a bundle of books, and at her side was a quietly-dressed young woman, who was holding her mistress's jewel box.

"Why, Christabel!" exclaimed Carbonell, pleasure and annoyance struggling for the mastery, as he held off his hand. "I did not know you were back in town!"

"Probably not, since I have only this minute come up."

"Who is with you?"

"Papa. But he has gone to make some inquiries at the office about a box he has lost. But you haven't answered my question. Where are you going?"

"To Brussels," was the brief reply.

"And why to Brussels, pray?"

"Oh, business."

Lady Christabel Kenmare broke into a deliciously silvery laugh.

"Business! business! What a convenient use you men make of that extremely elastic word! Now, in all probability, the literal translation of it, so far as you are concerned, is—pleasure."

"It is nothing of the sort. If I consulted pleasure," he added, dropping his voice so that she only heard what he said, "I should remain where you are."

He looked at her out of his deep blue eyes, with an expression of such ardent admiration, that the rich colour deepened in her cheeks, and she glanced away from him into the compartment where he sat.

Her eyes fell on the quiet, girlish figure in the corner; but as there was an old lady sitting in the carriage as well, she did not think of connecting Lucinda with Captain Carbonell.

She did not trouble to lower her voice as she said, with the insolence of a great lady, —

"Why don't you engage a compartment to yourself? It is horrid travelling with nobody knows who!"

Bertie seemed a little embarrassed.

"Oh," he said, with a forced laugh, "the journey to Dover is not very long, and I am not a special lover of solitude. I shall be back in London the day after to-morrow, and then I shall take the first opportunity of coming to see you. Good-bye, Christabel! the train is just going."

She nodded a careless farewell, and the train steamed slowly out of the station. As it went Lucinda leaned forward, her dusky eyes glowing like two stars.

"What a lovely lady! She is like a picture!"

Bertie smiled at the comparison, but the honest admiration pleased him.

"That is my cousin," he said, and then he took up a paper, and relapsed into silence.

Lucinda rather wondered—she was an honest little soul, and open as the day herself,—that he had not told his cousin the object of his journey to Brussels, instead of putting her off with vague generalities.

Nothing would have pleased Bertie better than to make a *confidante* of Lady Christabel, but his knowledge of her character induced him to doubt very much, whether he would have had her sympathies.

Young as she was, she was a thorough woman of the world, and her estimate of human nature was not a high one.

She would have laughed at Bertie, called him Quixotic, asked him why he should trouble himself with a waif of humanity whom he had rescued from death, and advised him to think twice before he accepted the responsibility of Lucinda's future.

All things considered, he decided he should do better by keeping his own counsel.

The journey to Dover was uneventful, but

the Channel proved so rough that Carbonell deemed it advisable to put off crossing it until morning, so he took his *protégé* to an hotel; and when Lucinda was in her room, her trunk was brought up to her, and she took her first peep at its contents.

It is impossible to describe the delight of the poor child as she saw the different things provided for her. She, who had never known what it was to have decent clothes to her back, suddenly found herself the possessor of an outfit which, though it was plain, seemed to her unaccustomed eyes splendid enough for a princess of the blood.

Her heart overflowed more and more in gratitude to Bertie, this magnificent fairy prince, who had changed the whole face of existence for her, to whom she could never render enough thanks for his wonderful goodness.

In a transport of gratitude she threw herself on her knees on the floor, and held up her hands to Heaven, and then she registered an inunctional vow that, if ever it lay in her power to requite him, she would not spare her heart's best blood, her last chance of happiness, if by resigning them she could add one iota to his well-being!

CHAPTER III.

SCHOOLDAYS.

The school to which Carbonell took his *protégé* was situated in one of the quietest parts of Brussels, and was kept by an English lady named Stewart, who had once been governess to Lady Christabel Kenmare, and with whom Bertie himself always had been a great favorite.

She was a calm, sweet-looking woman of middle age, with traces of sorrow on her face, and a gentle manner that at once won Lucinda's confidence.

Of course, she was much surprised to see Bertie bringing a pupil to her, and still more surprised when she heard that pupil's history, for he had decided that he owed it to her to conceal nothing.

Lucinda was not present during the conference—indeed, Bertie had wished her a final good-bye, telling her to "be a good girl, and learn her lessons," which she promised to do.

Miss Stewart removed a latent fear from the young soldier's mind by evincing the greatest sympathy with the poor child, and by promising to do her very best for Lucinda's welfare. No vulgar prejudices interfered with her kindness of heart, and she warmly praised Bertie for his chivalrous generosity.

"I don't know that I have done anything specially worthy of praise," he said, modestly. "I am well off, and I am going to give this miserable child an education that will fit her to earn her own living—*voilà tout!* Now, as to terms."

The terms were agreed upon without any sort of difficulty. It is true the schoolmistress suggested that Lucinda should be a pupil-teacher, and thus reduce the sum to be paid, but Bertie laughed the notion to scorn.

"Hang pupil-teachers!" he exclaimed. "I'll let the girl have a good time while she is with you, if I can—what happens afterwards is her own look-out!"

And so it came to pass that Lucinda had the best masters, and received the best education that money could procure. Miss Stewart was very good to her, and although the girls laughed at her at first for her ignorance, they soon grew to like her for her good nature. Her nature was indeed very sweet, and her talents were very considerable. It was quite wonderful to see how quickly she picked up the French language, and how soon she learned to speak her own correctly; but still more wonderful was it to trace her progress in music. Miss Stewart soon discovered that she had a marvellous voice, and a real gift for music, so she made a special point of

cultivating it, and in a very short time Lucinda was admitted to be one of the best musicians in the school.

Naturally the girl's temperament was indolent, but her will was strong, and some inward force made her overcome this weakness, and throw herself into her studies with an ardor that left nothing to be desired.

"It is the only way in which I can show any gratitude to Captain Carbonell," she said once to Miss Stewart, and herein lay the key to her endeavours. Bertie was her hero—her king—to whom she rendered up all the homage of her heart. The image of his bright, blue-eyed, debonair face never left her—it haunted her by night and by day. Every scrap of news that came from him was treasured up as a miser treasures up his gold. It is true Bertie did not write often, but now and again a note arrived from him to her—just a few words, asking how she was getting on, and whether she was happy, or perhaps a little present when Christmas time came round. She made a little bag of blue silk, into which these tiny notes were put, and fastened it round her neck by a ribbon. It seemed to her like a link between them.

Gradually the memory of her miserable childhood and brutal relations faded from her mind, and was replaced by hopeful dreams of the future—dreams in which Carbonell always played an important part. She lost the pathetic melancholy that had formerly shadowed her face, and grew bright and gay as befitted her age. At the end of two years it would have been hard to recognise in Miss Stewart's tall, graceful, refined pupil the forlorn little creature whom Bertie Carbonell had pulled out of the river.

By the officer's advice she had changed her name, for, as he remarked, the name of Revel was not especially common, and supposing she retained it, it would serve as a guide to her uncle and aunt if they should chance to institute any search for her. When the question was discussed with Miss Stewart, she had said,—

"Why not call her Lucinda Richmond, since it was near Richmond that you saw her first?"

Bertie thought the suggestion a good one; and so it was adopted, and Lucinda was henceforth known as Miss Richmond.

It was in the third year of her residence in Brussels, that an event happened which was destined to change the whole course of her life.

The summer holidays had just commenced, and all the girls, with the exception of Lucinda, had gone home.

Miss Stewart, who usually went to England, had been detained this year by business affairs which required her superintendence; but she was hoping daily to get away.

Schoolmistress and pupil were sitting together in the salon one afternoon, when there was announced no less a personage than the Earl of Thorleigh—Lady Christabel Kenmare's father—and Captain Carbonell's uncle.

He shook hands with Miss Stewart, but when the latter presented Lucinda to him he looked a little startled, and it was a minute or two before he responded to her greeting.

"You must forgive me," he said, bowing courteously; "but I was taken aback by your likeness to someone whom I once knew. It is really very striking!" he added, in a musing tone, more to himself than to her.

He was a tall, fine-looking man, with iron-grey hair and moustache—a kindly man, as was evinced by his benevolent-looking eyes, but certainly not a man of strong will.

"I hardly expected to find you in Brussels," he said to the schoolmistress; "but I called on the off-chance. The fact is, I want to discover a governess for a little girl to whom I have been left guardian, and I thought you would be the most likely person to help me in the matter. This child—her name is Mona Lisle—is the daughter of a very old friend of



IN THE DEPTHS OF DESPAIR.

mine, who was a widower, and who has just died at Rome. I was with him in his last moments, and he begged me to look after his daughter, which I promised to do. So I am taking her to England with me; and I think it would be an immense advantage if I could take a governess with her."

Miss Stewart thought for a few minutes, then shook her head rather hopelessly.

"I'm afraid I don't know anyone who would suit you. What sort of a person do you require?"

"She must be young—that is a primary consideration. Also, she must be a good musician, and good-tempered. For the rest it does not matter so much."

"This young lady answers to all your requirements, then," observed Miss Stewart, smilingly, as she laid an affectionate hand on Lucinda's shoulder; "but I don't know whether she would care to leave school for another six months. She is not yet eighteen."

The Earl seemed to catch rather eagerly at the suggestion.

"If Miss Richmond would come to Thornleigh Castle we would try to make her happy," he said, with a kindly glance at the young girl, who was bending eagerly forward, the light of anticipation shining in her lucid eyes.

She knew that Lord Thornleigh was Lady Christabel's father. She knew also that they were both relations of Bertie's.

If she went to Thornleigh Castle, what vistas were opened to her of seeing Carbonnell—of speaking to him, of hearing his voice!

Her breath came in quick, little gasps.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands tightly together; "I should like to accept the position very much—very much, indeed!" Then a sudden thought seemed to strike her, and she looked at the schoolmistress. "That is, if you approve," she added, deprecatingly.

Miss Stewart did not answer at once; pre-

sently she sent Lucinda out of the room on some little errand, and then she turned to the Earl.

"Before I could consent to your engaging Miss Richmond, I feel it a duty to tell you her history—or, at least, as much of it as I know," she said; and then she related to Lord Thornleigh all that Bertie had told her, and ending up with, "Captain Carbonnell laid strictest injunctions on me not to mention his name as the girl's benefactor"; but in this particular instance, I feel sure he would forgive me for transgressing his wishes, for it would not be right to let her become an inmate of your home, while you remained in ignorance of her antecedents."

The Earl was thoughtful for a few minutes, then he said,—

"I honour Carbonnell for his generosity, and I see no reason why this poor girl's early history should prejudice her future. You say she is amiable and trustworthy?"

"Her nature is one in a thousand!" exclaimed the schoolmistress, enthusiastically. "She is sweet, gentle, and truthful in the highest degree. At the same time, she has great force of character. I am sure she will make an excellent governess."

"In that case I will engage her," said the Earl, finally. "I confess her face has taken my fancy—if she is as sweet as she looks I shall have nothing to complain of. As you know," he added, smiling, "I am a radical in principles, and the fiction of blue blood does not influence me much."

And thus it was decided that Lucinda should leave school. Carbonnell had intended her to remain there for another six months, but Miss Stewart felt it was for the girl's interests, to take advantage of the stroke of good luck that had given her the chance of entering the Earl of Thornleigh's household. Such an opportunity might not occur again. Unfortunately, it was impossible to consult Bertie himself on the subject, as he was away

in Turkey, and had left no address for letters to be forwarded to.

Lucinda grew very excited, and plied Miss Stewart with questions concerning her new home—which, of course, the schoolmistress knew very well, as she had spent seven years there. But she was rather inclined to be reticent, especially in answering the girl's queries about Lady Christabel.

"Lady Christabel is very beautiful, and very accomplished," she contented herself with saying. "She is about two-and-twenty now, and is one of the reigning belles at Court. The rest you must find out for yourself."

When the time for parting came, both teacher and pupil were unfeignedly sorry to say good-bye to each other. Lucinda clung round Miss Stewart's neck, weeping as she kissed her, and loading her with grateful thanks for all her kindness.

"Recollect," said the governess, with a solemnity that had something prophetic in it, "that if the time ever comes when you find yourself friendless, and alone, you can always come back to me. The world is a hard place—how cruel even you, although you have had some experience, cannot tell. It may be that its blighting influence will fall on you—though I pray Heaven to avert it! If it does, remember what I have said."

A sort of chill ran through the young girl's veins. It seemed as if, for a moment, the curtain of the future were unrolled, and she saw all the horror it was destined to reveal. She shivered, and it was as though an icy hand had been laid on her heart.

After she left Miss Stewart, however, the impression passed away, and the buoyancy of youth reasserted itself. She was going to a new life—she was going to play her part in the world's great drama—and she was going to see Bertie!

(To be continued.)



"IF YOU HAVE A WOMAN'S HEART WITHIN YOUR BREAST," THE MAN CRIED, "HIDE ME, SAVE ME!"

NOVELLETTE.]

A DARING ESCAPE.

—:—

CHAPTER I.

"I am so tired of it, so tired of it! This death-in-life grows unbearable!"

Leaning over the garden gate, looking away across the moors to the purple hills beyond, I, Stella Brookfield, utter the above words in a kind of weary disgust—a state of utter hopelessness that the smallest pebble in the shape of an event will ever stir the stagnant pool of my everyday existence.

The October day is warm, still, oppressive. A dead calm reigns around.

The smooth, unbroken monotony, the want of all incident, is killing me inch by inch.

If I could only escape from it! But how?

Stay where you are! the placid, surrounding influences seem to say. Food, clothing, shelter, freedom from all care or anxiety, a tranquil dream-like atmosphere, are yours while you remain here. What more would you have?

And I answer passionately,

"Much; oh! so much beyond this calm, soulless existence. I would fain go out into the world that lies beyond those purple hills; to mingle freely with men and women; no longer to stand aloof, knowing neither joy nor sorrow. I would fain share in the laughter and the tears, the blows and the kisses, the passion and the pain of this wonderful world. Let me go, let me go!"

As a rule, these stormy moods generally evaporate in useless tears, and enforced submission to my lot.

To-day, however, I am unusually restless and discontented; perhaps because I am quite alone.

My uncle, James Brookfield, has gone to visit a friend, who lives some five miles off.

He will not return until night; and the girl from the village, who assists me with the housework during the morning, has just gone home, leaving me monarch of all I survey.

Our cottage, situated in the midst of the moor country, where the breeze is always fresh and the air sweet, contains but five rooms.

It is little more than a labourer's abode; the front door opening into the parlour, while beyond that is the kitchen. Yet it commands a splendid view over miles of undulating moorland, rising into grey Tors here and there against the sky; while it is quite large enough for the modest requirements of Uncle James and myself.

I have lived here with him ever since I was seven years old. I sometimes wonder impatiently if I shall die here!

Yesterday was my seventeenth birthday. Uncle James did not give me so much as his blessing in the shape of a birthday present.

His affection for me never takes a demonstrative form. Yet I believe, in his heart, he cares a little for his orphan niece; while I am really fond of him, crotchety, whimsical, irascible, old bachelor as he is.

When you have only one relation in the world you are compelled to make the most of him, whatever his failings may be.

Uncle James is possessed of no means beyond a modest annuity, one-third of which he spends upon rare editions of his favourite authors, for he is a bookworm, a student who absorbs all, and produces nothing.

Whatever is to become of me when he dies I have not the least idea. At least, it will mean emancipation from Dartmoor.

Beyond the Vicar and the schoolmaster—both elderly and unmarried—we have no friends or acquaintances. A reserved, unscrupulous man, Uncle James has always shunned intercourse with the other people living near us.

I have only a dog and my birds, by way of

society. A girl-friend of my own age is a luxury I have never enjoyed.

Our cottage, surrounded by a large, rambling flower and vegetable garden, stands quite by itself at some distance from the village.

Princetown, and the famous Dartmoor prison, are at least five miles away, in the very heart and citadel of Dartmoor, where the hills stand round the horizon like natural fortifications.

I have frequently seen the prison—a great, grey building pierced with a multitude of small windows, or rather a collection of buildings, enclosed within a gigantic wall. I always turn away from it—surrounded as it is on all sides by wild and desolate moorlands—with a shudder.

The groups of convicts breaking stones by the roadside, each dressed in grey cap, jacket, and knickerbockers, spotted with marks like arrow-heads, never fail to depress me horribly.

Crime and misery seem branded on those hard, sullen faces. I pity their owners, even while I shrink from them in secret dread. I avoid going in that direction save when fate and Uncle James compel me to take it.

Even as I stand by the gate a fog—one of the fogs so frequently upon Dartmoor—is slowly rising, blotting out the distant hills, and the wide moorland. Even the scattered groups of white-washed cottages, each with its peat-stack, and great bushes of crimson fuchsia before the door, are growing dim and misty. The still, heavy atmosphere is all in favour of a dense fog. With a little shudder I turn and go indoors, followed by my pet collie, Scamp.

Our sitting-room is very plainly furnished. As I stand in the centre of it I can see my reflection in the mantel-glass—a most unflattering mirror, with a crack running across it, which completely cuts my visage in two.

The reflection is that of a tall, slim girl, with eyes of deepest blue, and long curving lashes—Irish eyes—capable of almost any expression under the sun; a pale, clear, creamy

complexion, and wavy masses of blue-black hair falling over her shoulders, merely fastened back with a ribbon. I have not had time to coil it yet this morning. My dress is of brown-holland, plainly made, its sole adornment a few late flowers stuck in my waist-belt.

Uncle James allows me about two guineas a year with which to replenish my wardrobe; and, thus far, I have been quite unable to favour M. Worth with an order.

"If I had only got a piano, like other girls!" I exclaim, discontentedly, as I get out my work-basket, and begin to attack the large holes in Uncle James's socks. "I think I could teach myself to play, and I know I can sing."

My voice is the one talent of which I have any reason to feel proud. It is a soprano-rich, full, flexible. The Vicar has pressed me into the choir service, and I am always expected to take the solo.

To a certain extent he—a lover of music—has trained my voice. I can sing accurately, with due regard to established rules. It is my one accomplishment. My uncle, who educated me himself, never allowed me to acquire any other.

The fog is growing thicker, the sense of loneliness increases. I shall be glad when Uncle James returns, although, when he is at home, I often grow tired of his fidgety irascible presence.

Putting aside my work I rise to prepare some dinner, taking all the while to Scamp, who understands me perfectly.

"You shall have something better than those horrid dry-dog biscuits to-day, old boy," I remark, as I cut him some slices of cold meat off the joint, while he executes a war-dance expressive of delight round the table. "If Uncle James only knew it, though—"

Boom! boom! boom!

As the sullen sound of the gun comes rolling towards me across the moors, the knife drops from my hand, I utter an involuntary cry.

I know its meaning only too well. I have heard it before. A convict has taken advantage of the fog to effect his escape. The alarm has been raised, and warders are out in every direction searching for the unhappy wretch, whose recapture is merely a question of time, the chances being clean against his getting completely away.

Going to the door I open it and look out. The fog is very dense; the moors and the stunted trees present a dim, spectral appearance. The road winding by our cottage garden is quite deserted. No human being is in sight.

"Heaven help him!" I say, mentally, as I go back to the table, leaving the door partly open. My sympathies, owing to some twit in my moral nature, are invariably on the side of the culprit, a fact of which Uncle James has frequently informed me. In imagination, I follow the escaped convict, and pity his frenzied condition, his wild alternations of hope and fear, his desperate dash for freedom.

Boom! boom! boom!

Again the sullen roar of the gun reaches my ears. Scamp has disposed of his meat in three gulps and a swallow. Now he sits watching me intently, asking, like Oliver Twist, "for more."

"What, another slice, Scamp? I dare not eat it," I inform him regretfully. "Uncle James always measures the joint with his eye. He would know that I could not have eaten so much meat myself at one meal, and—"

Ah! What was that?

I spring to my feet in sudden alarm at a crashing sound among the bushes at the back of the cottage, as if some heavy body had suddenly descended upon them. Scamp barks loudly, and rushes towards the open door. Another second, and it is darkened by a tall form.

Oh, Heaven, help me! Panting from his

long, desperate run, muddy, blood-stained, bare-headed, the escaped convict stands before me, and I am alone in the house!

"Call off your dog," he cries, hoarsely, as Scamp springs at him. "I shall do you no harm. Call him off, I say, if you would not have him strangled."

He is keeping Scamp at bay as he speaks. I summon my voice and call the dog back to me; then stand there motionless, one-hand on Scamp's collar, regarding my strange visitor in an ecstasy of terror. No escaped convict has ever come in our direction before.

"They are after me," he pants, his voice reduced to a whisper. "They will be here directly. I have doubled and turned like a hunted hare, but I could not throw them off the scent. If you have a woman's heart within your breast hide me, save me! Do not let me fall into their hands again!"

I gaze at him as if fascinated, making no reply. Terror has deprived me of speech. The escaped convict is a young man, tall, well-knit, and broad-shouldered. Even his disordered appearance, and the hideous prison garb he wears, fail to render him wholly frightful or repulsive. The well-shaped, erect head, the regular, clean-cut features, handsome grey eyes, and firm chin, scarcely denote a criminal origin. His voice, too, is singularly refined, his manner devoid of all brutality. These facts impress themselves upon me unconsciously, as it were, as we regard each other steadfastly.

A loud shout reaches us from across the moors at this moment. The convict starts violently, then, with one hurried glance over his shoulder, enters the room and flings himself at my feet.

"They are coming!" he gasps, "and I am dead beat; I cannot run another mile. Tell me, is there any place here where I can hide? I swear that I will not harm you or yours if you befriend me. I am neither a thief nor a murderer. I was wrongly accused of manufacturing false bank-notes, pronounced guilty, and sentenced to penal servitude for a crime I had not committed. The shameful wrong I had suffered was driving me mad. I determined to effect my escape or die in the attempt. I will never re-enter the prison alive! Will you save me? Young as you are, you cannot be wholly devoid of pity, and Heaven knows I stand in need of it now!"

As he speaks he clasps my hand in his burning ones; his handsome, haggard face is upraised imploringly to mine. His story may or may not be true, but it appeals forcibly to my heart.

I recognise intuitively that the man before me has nothing coarse or brutal in his nature, that he will offer me no violence, and my courage revives a little.

"I—I don't know," I stammered; "there is the wood-house—"

Again that shout, close to the cottage this time. With a look of despair I shall never forget, the convict springs to his feet.

"It is too late!" he moans. "I am trapped!"

But the very exigencies of the situation bring my scattered wits back to me as suddenly as they had departed.

"Go in there," I cry, pushing him towards a large cupboard in the parlour, which contains our stock of linens and china, "and leave the rest to me. No, don't shut the door," as he is about to close it after him; "leave itajar."

"You won't betray me?" he whispers.

"No," I reply firmly; then, hurrying into the kitchen beyond, I snatch up a chins-mug, and take a mean advantage of Scamp, who has followed me in, by closing the kitchen-door upon him, making him a prisoner.

Going out into the front garden I deliberately smash the mug upon the stone pathway. Leaving the pieces there I advance towards the

Here they come, dimly visible through the fog; three, four, five warders in dark blue uniforms, each man armed. I await their

arrival, an expression of terror—half real, half assumed—on my face, wondering not a little at my own suddenly-developed histrionic talent.

I beckon to these big stalwart fellows, and they come hurrying up.

"Have you seen him?" They demanded simultaneously, "our bird? We know he came this way."

"He was here not five minutes ago," I reply, with a commendable show of agitation. "He came to the door and asked for a drink of water. I was afraid not to give it to him. After drinking, he dashed the mug down—you see the pieces—and went off again at such a speed! He was out of sight in a moment. He frightened me almost to death."

"Which way did he go?" asks the head warder promptly.

I point down the road. The warders, with a passing nod, rush off in that direction after their man, poor deluded mortals, leaving me to my own reflections, not very pleasant ones just at present.

I, Stella Brookfield, have connived at a convict's escape. I have cheated and hoodwinked the representatives of the law, thereby rendering myself liable to I know not what pains and penalties. Moreover, the said convict is still in hiding beneath my uncle's roof, and how am I to dispose of him? This morning I complained of the want of all incident in my life. Now I have got rather more than I bargained for.

Half-fearfully I re-enter the cottage.

"They are gone," I say aloud.

My refugee emerges from the cupboard, a grateful expression on his pallid face.

"You have saved me," he murmurs.

"How can I ever thank you. If—"

He pauses abruptly, and sinks into the nearest chair. He is fearfully exhausted, on the verge of a fainting fit. I hurry to the cupboard, uncork Uncle James's bottle of old brandy kept for medicinal purposes, and pouring some into a wine-glass hold it to the convict's lips.

The spirit revives him. Presently he is able to take some food and a drink of milk. My heart beats wildly as I watch him, and wonder what will happen next; yet of the convict personally I no longer entertain any dread. His manner has, somehow, dispelled it. I feel convinced that before he became a convict he was a gentleman.

"If I might wash off some of this dust and grime," he says, wistfully.

I take him into the kitchen and leave him there, releasing Scamp, who has howled merrily for the last ten minutes. Standing by the front door I look anxiously up and down the road, ready to give the alarm should the warders return this way, a great dread tugging at my heart the while! What if my uncle should return earlier than usual, and find the convict here?

CHAPTER II.

His toilet, such as it is, completed, he re-enters the sitting-room, his blistered feet causing him to limp painfully.

Yes, this escaped convict is very handsome, decidedly the best-looking man I have as yet encountered. Our enrage, a light-haired, light-eyed, youth, who blushes up to his eyebrows whenever he has occasion to address me, will not bear comparison with him, so far as personal appearance goes.

The convict garb and the close-cropped brown hair cannot conceal his manly beauty of form and feature. His wash has refreshed and invigorated him. His grey eyes are full of resolute purpose again.

"Will you add to the kindness and presence of mind you have already evinced," he asks, "by permitting me to remain here until it grows dark? In these clothes," the blood rushing to his face as he alludes to them, "I run a fearful risk of detection."

"I am willing to do so," I reply. "I—I

should be sorry to see you recaptured, although I fear I have done wrong in concealing you. But my uncle will return in a few hours, and he would not hesitate to give you up. He would do it on principle, you know."

A bitter smile curves the convict's well-shaped lips.

"Ah, that word, principle, it is so often misapplied!" he says, quietly. "I have good cause to be thankful that you construe it differently."

"I am sorry for you," I remark, simply, "that is all! You may or may not be guilty; but you are young, and life within the prison walls must be a very dreadful affair!"

"I am not guilty," he says, solemnly; "although my innocence may never be vindicated in this world! I am the victim of a base conspiracy on the part of some persons unknown to me. I cannot even fathom their motive in thus fastening a crime upon me, and wrecking my life! Perhaps, should we ever meet again under different circumstances, I may be permitted to tell you more, to convince you that I am indeed innocent. My one chance now lies in escaping to America. Once there, I may assume a fresh identity, and live down the past."

"But in those clothes it seems impossible to escape!" I reply.

He glances despairingly at them, as if he, too, is aware how heavily they handicap him.

While he remains silent, my thoughts are busy.

There is a cast-off suit of Uncle James's upstairs.

Shall I fill up the measure of my iniquity by allowing the escaped convict to enjoy the possession of these garments? He cannot effect his escape in the dreadful prison dress.

Going upstairs, I fetch the clothes. He accepts them much as a drowning man might clutch at a life-belt thrown at him, and thanks me earnestly for this fresh infraction, on my part, of the law.

Then he retires into the kitchen again to assume his new apparel.

There is one difficulty—he is tall, big made, and broad-shouldered; Uncle James is of the wiry, grasshopper build.

The two men possess but one feature in common, namely—height.

When my strange guest appears rehabilitated, I can scarce suppress a laugh, dangerous as the situation is becoming.

The waistcoat will not meet round him by several inches; the seams of the coat are well-nigh bursting asunder. His sleeves scarcely permit him to move his arms; they give him the appearance of being trussed.

"I am afraid my rig-out is suggestive of Smike and Dotheboy Hall," he says, with the ghost of a smile. "Unlike Master Wackford Squeers, everything does not fit me. No matter, the clothes are a great improvement on those just cast aside. Will you permit me to bury them in the garden?"

I provide him with a spade for that purpose, then make up a little packet of food in readiness for him.

Already it is dark, and Uncle James may return at any moment. Surely the time never flew at such a fearful rate before!

A womanly, helpful instinct, which surprises myself, seems to animate me towards this big, handsome fellow, so entirely dependent upon my aid.

I am neither bashful nor afraid, although my experience of young men has hitherto been of the slightest.

I show him how to "ess" those lamed, blistered feet by passing a darning needle filled with grey worsted through the blisters.

I give him the packet of food, and press my half-guinea—my previous quarter's dressallowance, received only last week—into his hand. I insist upon his taking it, although he demurs.

"It is mine, and you can do nothing without money," I remark, in a tone of profound wisdom.

"Some day I will endeavour to repay it," he says, passionate gratitude rendering his voice hoarse and broken; "but your kindness—I shall never attempt to cancel that debt. Child, you have taught me that human nature is not utterly false and cruel, and heartless, that it admits of some exceptions. My brave little preserver, whatever the fate in store for me, your image will remain imprinted on my heart as long as I live!"

He lifts my hand to his lips and kisses it tenderly, respectfully. My eyes grow suddenly dim with unshed tears.

"Heaven grant that you may succeed in escaping!" I murmur.

"Will you tell me the name of the girl to whom I am so deeply indebted?" he asks.

"Stella Brookfield."

"You have indeed proved yourself to be my good star," he says, earnestly. "Over yonder, at the prison, I was merely a number—ninety-seven. Now I am a man again. You will think sometimes of Julian Tressider, and remember him in your prayers!"

"Julian Tressider! If I could but foresee how that name is destined to haunt me through the months and years yet to come!"

It is quite dark now, yet will he succeed in getting away in that ill-fitting suit, which says so plainly that it was never made for him?

It is only a shade less noticeable than his convict dress. As he turns to go a sudden inspiration seizes me. Bidding him wait a moment I dart upstairs, and commence to rummage wildly in a large old chest in the spare room, a "mistletoe bough," sort of chest, which is rarely opened.

If fifty warders had formed a circle around our cottage ten minutes later, armed to the teeth, they would have held no convict issuing forth from it. The only person who crosses the threshold, on her way home, is an old village woman, dressed in tatty black and poke bonnet, carrying a latch-key and a market basket. I bid her good-night at the door, and she replies in cracked, quivering tones. Then I close the door and sit down to await my uncle's return. He may come as soon as he likes now.

The old woman, who is tall, despite her bowed shoulders and drooping form, walks at a brisk pace along the country lanes. She must be a strong-nerfed old woman, too, for she chooses the least frequented paths. When she comes to a stile, instead of cautiously mounting the wooden steps, with the infirmity of age, this extraordinary old woman places her hands on the top bar, and leaps lightly over; then, shaking out her dress, resumes her journey.

Presently, however her pace grows slow and feeble, as four men come towards her, along a narrow lane with high banks on either side. The fog and the darkness combine to render their forms indistinct until they are quite close to the old woman. Then they resolve into four warders, four hungry, tired, footsore surly individuals—who, having failed to catch their "bird," are on their way back to the prison in a very unamiable frame of mind.

"Hi, mother!" says the foremost, stopping and addressing the village dame. "You haven't seen a man dressed in grey jacket and knicker-bockers skulking about anywhere in the lanes or the ditches, have you?"

"A man passed me just now without any hat on," replies the quivering old voice. "He went by like the wind. It was a mercy I wasn't knocked down. I can't tell you what he'd got on; my eyes is that bad, but his clothes were of a lightish colour. You don't mean to say he's a convict?"

"That's just what we do mean to say, mother," rejoins the warden gruffly. "Which way did he go?"

The old woman points away across the moors, in an opposite direction to the prison.

The warders hold a consultation as to the propriety of following up this new clue, late as it is.

They decide, somewhat reluctantly, to do so.

Bidding the dame good-night, they strike out in the direction indicated by her.

Wish something that sounds strangely like a suppressed laugh, rounded off quickly into a cough, she goes on her way.

The fog and the darkness swallow her up, and she is seen no more.

I am by no means sorry when Uncle James arrives home with the books, &c., he has been to borrow.

My nerves have been terribly shaken during his brief absence, and the solitude is becoming unbearable.

"They tell me a convict has escaped to-day," he remarks, as I help him off with his overcoat, and prepare his supper.

"Yes; and he came here!" I reply, boldly taking the conventional bull by the horns.

"Here!"

Uncle James's scanty grey hair stands well-nigh erect on his head. His long, thin features, which he is in the habit of contracting nervously, twitch in all directions at my information.

I repeat, for his benefit, the fiction respecting the drink of water asked for, and the broken mug, previously related to the warders, since it is sure to reach him from some other source.

My conscience pricks me for thus deceiving him. I have never told him a falsehood until now.

Were he to learn the truth, however—to become aware that an escaped convict had been harboured by me beneath his respectable roof—am sure he would never survive it.

Having no desire to shorten his existence—he is only an annuitant—I decide to withhold the truth.

"I am thankful that the fellow made no attempt to injure you, Stella, or to rob the house!" he remarks, as he sits down to supper; "very thankful. You shall never be left quite by yourself after this. The desperate villain! I sincerely hope they have captured him by this time, and that he is safely lodged in the prison again."

I do not echo this sentiment. I trust—oh, how fervently!—that Julian Tressider will succeed in effecting his escape.

My complicity is not likely to be discovered unless Uncle James should ask for his cast-off suit, which is most improbable. He certainly cysts the joint, cut down close to the bone, suspiciously, and makes a sarcastic comment on my healthy appetite; but no idea of the truth dawns upon his mind, and I am thankful.

Three, four, five days go by, and Julian Tressider is still at large. They have scoured Dartmoor in search of him, but to no purpose. I begin to breathe freely again. Perhaps, by this time, he is on his way to America. If so, am I ever fated to see him again?

A strange restlessness takes possession of me as the quiet, uneventful days glide by, in such marked contrast to the one exciting incident that has ever varied my dull life. This restlessness takes a new form. Previously it was a vague, general yearning for change and action of some kind. Now my thoughts concentrate themselves upon Julian Tressider. He occupies my mind exclusively. I am even conscious of an intense yearning to see him again, to learn how fortune is treating him. Existence in this out-of-the-way place seems more unbearable than ever.

I know so little respecting love or lovers, yet I have read with avidity the few novels I could buy or borrow; and, in common with most other girls, I have indulged in day-dreams with regard to a wonderfully handsome and delightfully vague lover awaiting me somewhere in the far-off future.

It cannot surely be that I have fallen in love with Julian Tressider, a man I have only seen once, an escaped convict, who may, despite his assertion to the contrary, be actually guilty of the crime for which he was undergoing penal servitude? I grow alternately hot and cold as the idea suggests itself to me. I deny it indignantly, and make a firm resolve to put him out of my thoughts completely,

with the result that he occupies my mind to a still greater extent than before.

Scamp and I start out for a long ramble by ourselves one fine morning. The dying splendours of October are all around us. The wide moors are afire with brilliant, orange-tinted bracken. The oak-trees are kindling into a rich brown. Fragrant peat-smoke from the cottages curls lazily up into the blue sky. I mean to climb to the very top one of the steep tors in order to enjoy a splendid prospect.

Half-way up the rugged grass-grown path I sit down to rest and look about me, while Scamp darts off on an excursion of his own. I have no actual troubles to oppress me, yet, as I sit there with the soft breeze blowing on my face, and the blue sky far above, unbidden tears come rushing to my eyes, a yearning I cannot control fills my heart.

"Oh, if he were only here—if I could see him but for a moment," I cry mentally, "it would ease this dull, constant pain."

"Miss Brookfield!"

I spring up with a little cry and look round, to find, standing close beside me, a tall man with dark hair, and a long, dark beard. He must have approached me by another path. I have never seen him before, yet surely the voice is familiar!

As I gaze at him somewhat apprehensively he smiles. Hair and beard disappear, and my heart gives a great bound that well-nigh stifles me, as he stands there in the radiant sunlight. It is Julian Tressider!

"Mr. Tressider!" I exclaim.

"I hope I have not frightened you?" he says reassuringly. "I have waited so long for this opportunity of seeing and speaking to you again. I feared it would never arrive."

"But what madness," I remonstrate, "after getting away to return to Dartmoor again, I thought you had sailed ere this!"

"I could not go to America until I had thanked you once more," he said, earnestly. "I owe my escape to you, remember, to your sympathy, your presence of mind."

So it is for my sake that he has run this fearful risk of detection and recapture. Somehow I forget to blame him. Sitting on one of the granite boulders that strew the hill-top—we have climbed higher up—he tells me that a friend, who believes firmly in his innocence, has supplied him with funds to enable him to go to America. His passage is already taken, and three days' hence he will bid good-bye to England.

A strange sense of having known him for a long while, of being perfectly familiar with him, possesses me. I listen to his plans, as he unfolds them, with deepest interest.

"I should feel comparatively happy," he says, in conclusion, "even with that unfinished sentence still hanging over my head, if you could but be persuaded to believe in my innocence, to regard me as sinned against, not sinning. Will you listen to my version of the crime wrongly imputed to me?"

My silence gives consent. He proceeds to tell me about the forged notes found in his possession when, an accusation having been laid against him by some person unknown, the detectives came to search his rooms, his utter inability to account for their presence, his vain attempt to clear himself from such a charge, his subsequent misery; and when he concludes I am no longer in doubt respecting his innocence or guilt.

"If the whole world adjudged you guilty," I say, firmly, "after what you have just told me I should continue to believe in your innocence."

He turns away for a moment to conceal his emotion—he cannot speak.

"Will you give me some little thing that you have worn as a keepsake?" he asks, pleadingly, ere we part.

I untie the little silk handkerchief from around my neck, and hand it to him in silence. Another moment, and he is walking rapidly away, in and out among the granite boulders, and I am alone.

CHAPTER III.

"THOMAS JONES, you are singing flat, sir. John Hodges, take your hands out of your pockets. Hold your head up, and open your mouth well, or I'll teach you to sing out properly in a way that you won't like. Timothy Bell, stop pinching the boy who sits next to you. Now then, altogether, for 'Greenland's Ioy mountains.'"

We start accordingly, at our choir-master's bidding, for that frozen region, one voice a long way ahead, the others far in the rear, frantically trying to catch it up. If I may be permitted to indulge in a very bad pun, ours bids fair to be a "wailing" expedition; for Timothy Bell, who has just received two smart raps on the head from the choir-master's baton, is on the verge of a roar, and that boy's lungs are amazingly strong.

"Very bad, indeed!" is the discouraging comment when we have somehow scrambled through or over Greenland's Ioy mountains, not to mention India's coral strand. "Very bad; you lose ground instead of gaining it. Now, let us see if we can attempt 'Jerusalem the golden' in better style."

Without a moment's respite we start on another journey. This time our combined performance elicits a little cautious praise from our choir master, who leads the way. We fairly take "Jerusalem the golden" by storm.

I am afraid ours must be termed a "scratches" choir. It consists chiefly of village boys, a few young men and girls, the Vicar's sister, two elderly spinsters, and myself.

We meet for practice once a week in the empty church. I am seldom absent on these occasions. I have so little to occupy my time that the choir practice, uninteresting as it is, forms a slight variation.

Two months have elapsed since I parted from Julian Tressider on the grey rugged for two long dreary months. It is now mid-winter. He promised ere we parted to inform me by some means of his safe arrival in America; but I have received no communication from him as yet.

The dreadful truth must be told. I have been compelled to admit it to myself. I am in love with this man, whom I have seen but twice, this escaped convict, who owes his deliverance to me.

I believe firmly in his innocence. Julian Tressider could not, I feel convinced, have stooped to commit crime, especially such a crime as that wrongly imputed to him.

If I am fated to live fifty years longer in this desolate place I shall never experience for any other man the passionate love which he has, all unconsciously, aroused within my breast.

Forces hitherto dormant have been aroused, never to slumber again. I am no longer a girl. I have crossed the boundary line, and become a woman, with all a woman's faculty for loving, suffering, and rejoicing.

Until lately I had not even guessed at the existence of such deep tumultuous feeling—such intense emotion in my nature—a complete outgoing of self towards the man I love. It has taken me by surprise. I hardly seem to recognize myself under this new, changed aspect.

Only to be near him—to share his life, however rough and toilsome—to feel that I was dear and necessary to him—would mean bliss beyond the power of words to describe.

But I am nothing to him, I reflect miserably. He will soon forget me out there, or remember me only with a little gratitude as the girl who once aided him in a sore emergency.

Why, even if my love were requited Julian Tressider, with that undeserved slur upon his name, the penalty of the law still awaiting him should he be rearrested, would never dream of avowing his passion, and asking me to become his wife. My love is virtually hopeless.

"Miss Brookfield, your solo comes next!" I awake with a start from the reverie into which I had fallen, and give my full attention to the choir-master.

"Oh, for the wings of a dove!" As my voice floats upwards the yearning pathetic words, wedded to exquisite music, seem to embody my own wistful longings and aspirations. The dull pain at my heart grows lighter. The anthem carries me out of myself. I forget my sorrow as I sing. The rich, full, long-sustained notes ring through the empty church. All my soul seems thrilling out in my voice. I have never sung with such power and expression before. The other members of the choir regard each other in silent astonishment. I am beside myself, as it were, this afternoon, carried away by a power over which I have no control.

Not until I resume my seat, after receiving an approving nod from the choir-master, do I become aware of the presence of a stranger in the church.

He is a little man, stout and dark. He wears a long rich sealskin overcoat, calculated to arouse envy in the breast of each female present, and a diamond ring sparkles on the little finger of his left hand. He has the appearance of a foreigner or "professional" of some kind. What has brought him to this out-of-the-way spot, to listen to the crude singing of a village choir? The same question seems to be agitating the minds of the other members as they glance curiously at him.

During the hymn-practice the stranger evidently finds it difficult to retain his seat. I am sure I detected him just now stuffing a plump white finger in each ear. But when it comes to my turn to sing alone he is all attention. What can it mean?

Choir-practice over, the stranger comes boldly forward and addresses the Vicar. The two converse together for several moments; the unknown produces his card. I have taken leave of the others, and am about to quit the church, when the Vicar calls me back.

"Stella, my dear," he says, a perplexed expression upon his kind, homely face, "this gentleman has expressed a wish to be introduced to you. Miss Brookfield, Professor Paoli."

The Professor bows low, and compliments me upon my singing in broken English, glancing keenly at me the while, with his small, deep-set, brilliant dark eyes.

"Professor Paoli," continues the Vicar, "is, I need hardly tell you, well known in the musical world. Some of our most famous singers were formerly among his pupils. He has been induced to come down here on the strength of a representation made to him by a friend, staying here in the autumn. This gentleman was so much impressed with your singing, Stella, that he mentioned it to Signor Paoli; hence his presence here to-day."

"And I am quite ready to endorse my friend's assertion," interposed the little Italian. "The young lady has a splendid voice, but it is sadly in need of training. That such a gift should have been so neglected fills me with regret."

"Neglected! Why, I have supervised the musical part of her education myself, ever since she was a child!" exclaims the Vicar, somewhat nettled at this disparaging allusion to the results of his work as a teacher.

The Italian smiles a compassionate smile; but he is too polite to make any further comment.

"She will have much to unlearn as well as to learn should she accept my offer," he says, guardedly. "Miss Brookfield," turning to me, "with that voice it is a mistake for you to remain here in obscurity, wasting the time which should be spent in hard study, previous to your appearance in public. I, Paoli, tell you that you possess a fortune in your voice. Moreover, I am willing to accept you as my pupil, to bring you out two years hence upon the operatic stage, should you and your friends consent to such an arrangement."

For a moment I cannot reply. The dazzling prospect thus unexpectedly opened up before me has taken away my breath.

To be told that I possess an unusual gift, to be offered the means of developing it by one so competent to form an opinion as Professor Paoli, is to be favoured indeed!

Delirious visions of wealth and fame, of a reunion with Julian Tressider, flit through my mind, as I stand there, confronting the two men.

They understand my emotion, and make due allowance for it.

"You would not object to become rich-famous—a *prima donna*, with diamonds that an empress might envy?" asks the Professor, a gleam of amusement in his dark eyes. "Only I warn you before the triumph comes much hard work; and you are beginning late!"

"Object!" I exclaim, a little catch in my voice. "I will study night and day to attain such a result. I cannot thank you sufficiently for the generous offer just made. It is what I have most longed for ever since I knew I could sing. Do you think?" appealing to the Vicar, "that my uncle will give his consent to such an arrangement?"

He shakes his head, thus confirming my own secret fears.

"He is certain to raise objections to it, Stella. The appearance in public would offend his most cherished prejudices. Never mind, child! Don't look so bitterly disappointed. The Professor and I will walk home with you, and lay the proposal before him. You must, of course, abide by your uncle's decision, whichever way it turns!"

"Oh! that suspenseful walk across the moors, in the direction of our cottage! My nerves are at high tension. The atmosphere seems fraught with coming change, with thronging hopes, and wide, wonderful possibilities.

If only Uncle James will consent to my becoming the Professor's pupil, good-bye to dullness and *ennui*! Life will have commenced for me in earnest at last.

I may little as we go along. The Vicar and the Professor do most of the talking, but my thoughts are very busy.

Uncle James receives us in his small study. His long, narrow face looks terribly uncom-promising as he listens to the Professor's favourable account of my voice, and the rare opportunity of turning it to advantage that he is willing to accord me. My heart sinks lower and lower as I see his features begin to twitch irascibly—a sure sign that he is displeased.

"You ask me, sir," he says, addressing the Professor, "if I will allow my niece to commence a course of study under your auspices, with a view to her becoming a public singer, and my answer is no—decidedly no. I would as soon permit her to become a *circus-rider*."

"The two professions admit of no comparison," retorts the Italian. He is fiery, my uncle irascible. The Vicar strives in vain to throw oil on the troubled waters. They go at it hammer and tongue. The Professor argues, expostulates, entreats, all to no purpose. Uncle James will not budge an inch from the position he has taken up, and which his natural obstinacy renders still more impregnable. When I venture to add my entreaties to those of the Italian I am promptly told to hold my tongue.

"Sir, you are not justified in withholding such a superb voice from the public, to whom it really belongs," exclaims the Professor, as a parting shot.

"Sir, so far as I and my niece are concerned, the public may be—"

Here the Vicar stirs the fire energetically, and the remainder of the sentence is lost to posterity. Five minutes later he has quitted our cottage, accompanied by the Professor, and my disappointment finds vent in a fit of hysterical weeping.

My uncle standing on the hearthrug, his legs wide apart, his scanty hair, through which he has repeatedly run his fingers, in

his excitement, combed bolt upright, regards me sarcastically.

"If you are bent upon making that noise, Stella," he says, with ironical politeness. "oblige me by going to your own room, where you can keep it up as long as you like without fear of interruption. Upon my word," addressing an imaginary audience, "this girl's ingratitudo surpasses everything. I board, clothe, and educate her for a number of years; we reside constantly beneath the same roof. Yet she is ready to leave me at a moment's notice—at the invitation of a play-acting foreigner, of whom she knows simply nothing—just because he has flattered her vanity, and made her a few specious promises. Ye gods! and this is what you may expect to receive in return for bringing up another man's child!"

Beneath his sarcastic vein I detect a certain amount of hurt feeling. Is it possible that I have wounded him? Some of my angry, resentful disappointment dies out at the thought.

"Uncle James, I should have asked you to come and live near to me in London, that we might not be separated," I reply through my sobs. "I had no idea of leaving you. Such a splendid career might have opened out before me had you but accepted Professor Paoli's offer. Think how many books I could have bought for you when I began to earn money?"

I am afraid this is by no means a disinterested reminder. Uncle James merely grins at it, and goes back to his favourite Horace, while I fling myself out of the study in a very bad frame of mind indeed.

I am glad, so glad, afterwards, that I kiss him ere going to bed at night, although it costs me a struggle to conquer my resentment and do so.

When I awake the next morning, with a sense of deep depression, I go downstairs to find our little maid busy, but my uncle has not put in an appearance. What can make him, the soul of punctuality, so late?

I get my breakfast, still he fails to come down. Can he be ill? Growing somewhat alarmed, I go to the door of his room and knock. There is no response.

Opening the door I glance half fearfully inside; the room is empty. Going through it I enter the little study beyond. Uncle James is seated in his elbow-chair, with his back to me, in precisely the same attitude as when I quitted him last night.

He neither moves nor speaks when I address him. Thrilled through and through with sudden terror, I summon up my courage, and approach him.

One glance is sufficient to tell me what has happened. A visitor, whom no bolts or bars ever forged can keep out, has entered our house silently during the night. My only relative, my solitary friend and protector, Uncle James, is dead!

CHAPTER IV.

It is some time ere I recover from the shock of this sudden bereavement. Heart-disease, quite unsuspected by the sufferer, has carried Uncle James off. I miss him terribly. I never really knew how much I cared for him until now.

His fidgety ways, his irascible temper, are wholly lost sight of. I remember only the genuine kindness displayed towards me by the dead, and mourn for him sincerely. I stand quite alone in the world now, and the reflection is hardly a consoling one.

Uncle James's annuity, of course, died with him, leaving me unprovided for. The small sum of money realised by the sale of our furniture is all to which I can lay claim.

Pending the settlement of my very modest affairs, I am invited to stay at the Vicarage. After the funeral and the sale, the question of my future has to be faced. How am I, left entirely dependent upon my own exertions at the age of seventeen, to earn a livelihood?

The choice lies between a situation as nur-

sey governess, at twelve pounds a-year salary, or the acceptance of Professor Paoli's offer. With scarcely a moment's hesitation I decide in favour of the latter. Surely if my uncle could know now how I am placed he would not censure me for so doing!

After being informed by such a high authority as Professor Paoli that my voice, if trained, will probably open up a splendid career for me, it would be madness to hire myself out as a kind of white slave to teach children the alphabet, in deference to a prejudice entertained by the dead! Such a sacrifice would be useless, absurd.

I write to the Professor explaining my altered circumstances, and expressing my willingness to become his pupil. Then I await the reply with what patience I can command. Signor Paoli answers my letter in person. I am afraid that poor Uncle James's death is to him a cause of rejoicing rather than regret, since it enables me to accept his offer, to fall in with his views for me.

A formal agreement is drawn up, subject to the Vicar's approval. Signor Paoli undertakes to furnish me with board, residence, and dress, during the next two years, while my education is in progress.

After that, when I have made my *début*, he reserves to himself the right of forming my engagements and receiving two-thirds of any salary I may earn for a space of three years, to reimburse him for the expense he will have been at. For the next five years I pledge myself not to sing in public without his consent. The agreement is a very just one, and I sign it without the least hesitation.

Three days later I quit Dartmoor for London, accompanied by my master. He has a house in Belgrave, and I am to live there with Signor Paoli and his wife.

My eyes fill with tears as I gaze my last on the wide-swinging moorlands, the breezy rugged tors, which I have so often climbed, and the lonely cottage I once called home.

Now that I am about to quit Dartmoor, I am conscious of a feeling of affection for it. It is associated in my mind with Julian Tressider. It has ceased to be hateful to me on this account. I shall always think of him in connection with the moor country, and a sharp sense of pain pierces my heart as we leave it behind. The last link that bound me to the old life is severed now.

Once arrived in London, however, I have but little time to indulge in reveries or regrets. My musical education begins in earnest, and the Professor, although kind, is a very strict taskmaster. So many hours a-day are devoted to singing lessons, so many to stage deportment and the rudiments of the histrionic art. Fortunately Uncle James has grounded me well in Italian. Mine is a double task. Not only has my voice to be cultivated, but I have to acquire some knowledge of acting, of which I am entirely ignorant.

I work and study with a will, however, spurred on by a secret motive too sacred to be revealed to anyone else.

Fame, if I can compass it, will involve wealth, and wealth means power. It may enable me to seek out Julian Tressider, to place him in a position to establish his innocence, to look the world boldly in the face again. It is this wild, far-fetched hope which alone renders me so greedy of success.

My love for Julian Tressider has taken firm hold of me. He is still first in my heart and my thoughts, still my king among men, although no word comes to break the cruel silence enshrouding his fate. New surroundings and acquaintances have in no wise tended to weaken or divert the passionate, silent love I entertain for him. I could not be faithless to his memory if I tried. For joy or for sorrow my heart has gone out into his keeping, and some voice keeps whispering to me that we are fated to meet again.

Life in London flows with a brisk, rapid current, a perfect contrast to the sluggish existence on Dartmoor. The days seem all too

short for the work that has to be crowded into them, and the occasional pleasures that fall to my share.

The Professor expresses himself satisfied with my progress. He knows that I strain every nerve to realise his expectations, while looking forward to my *début* with mingled dread and delight.

"You will never set the *Thames* on fire as an actress," he remarks one day, "but your voice improves rapidly; and, after all, in opera the acting is but a secondary consideration; the singing is of paramount importance."

The Signora is very kind and friendly in her attitude towards me. She is a large, indolent, handsome woman, with no children of her own. She takes me under her wing, treats me with every indulgence, and has a battle-royal with the Professor, now and then on the score of my being worked too hard.

"Does she look as if I beat, starved, or overworked her?" demands the Professor one day at luncheon, when the question is being discussed between them. The Signora wishes to take me with her to an evening party. Her husband demurs. He fears late hours for me, and a possible cold.

I laugh in response to his question. My appearance is certainly not that of a badly-treated pupil. My slim form has assumed rounder curves of late. My eyes are brighter than of yore, a faint colour tinges my once pale face. I have gained rather than lost in looks since coming to London, and the Signor knows this.

His wife carries her point, however, and carries me off later on, in triumph, to the party. By this time I know a number of people. I thoroughly appreciate the pleasant society, literary, artistic, Bohemian, the clever genial men and women, some of them world-renowned, whom I am in the habit of meeting at home, and when I accompany the Signora to other houses.

The drawing-room of the celebrated portrait-painter, whose guests we are to-night, is quite full when the Signora and I enter it. They are about to commence dancing. The Signora, magnificent in velvet and old point, subsides into a low, comfortable basket-chair. I, gowned in simple white, with a few flowers as my only ornament, sit beside her.

Presently a gentleman comes up and greets the Signora in a manner that betokens him to be a familiar acquaintance. He glances in my direction, and she forthwith introduces us.

Five minutes later I am dancing with this new acquaintance, whose waltzing leaves nothing to be desired. Our dance over, he leads me back to my seat and draws another close to it, evidently bent upon conversation. A stately dowager has engrossed the Signora's attention, so we are quite undisturbed.

Sir Percy Delahaye is a tall man of eight-and-twenty or thirty, with clear-cut, handsome features, brilliant dark eyes, a clear brown complexion, and dark hair and moustache. An indefinable air of good-breeding distinguishes the young Baronet, yet I feel by no means attracted towards him. On the contrary, he inspires me with a sense of repulsion. There is a sinister gleam in those brilliant dark eyes of his, a mocking curve of the thin, well-shaped lips, that repels me instinctively.

Yet his manners are suave, courteous, high-bred, and the conversation he maintains with me is not lacking in interest.

"Six months hence, Miss Brookfield," he says, in allusion to my first appearance in public, "the world will be at your feet. You will have taken it by storm. Signor Paoli's pupils are always a success, and you will form no exception to the general rule. I have displayed consummate wisdom in making your acquaintance previous to your *début*. I can only hope you will not ignore me later on, when you are in universal request."

I laugh and blush. The admiration in his eyes is so obvious.

"You are far more likely to forget me," I

reply; "and my success is not likely to be on a large scale, especially at first."

"To forget you would be impossible," says Sir Percy, decisively; "unless man had lost his memory altogether. I shall be present on your first night, ready to lead the applause."

"I hope I shall not suffer from stage-fright," I continue. "That would be dreadful, after all the pains Signor Paoli has taken with me."

"No, you will rise to the occasion," he rejoins, regarding me keenly as he speaks. "If I am not mistaken, you would rather die than fall in anything you attempted. Did I understand from the Signora that you had not always lived in London?"

"Yes, until quite recently. Dartmoor was my home," I answer. "I lived there with my uncle."

"Ah, a dreary sort of place Dartmoor," says Sir Percy, languidly; "generally associated in the public mind with convicts, a big prison, stone-breaking, and that sort of thing."

Again the swift blood rushes to my face. I feel inclined to resent Sir Percy's careless allusion to convicts for Julian Tressider's sake. Yet this is absurd, for, of course, he cannot guess how sensitive I am upon this subject.

"Some parts of Dartmoor are very lovely," I reply, "and the prison was at least five miles off from our house."

"I have heard," he resumes, in a low, penetrating tone, intended for my ear alone, "that strange things happen on Dartmoor; quite phenomenal occurrences. For instance, suits of convicts' clothes have been dug up in cottage gardens, in lieu of potatoes. Indian old women have been seen to leap a stile at night with the ease and agility of a young man. Possibly the bracing air may account for the old lady's acrobatic feats, but the clothes must needs remain an unsolved mystery. Botany refuses to account for them."

As he speaks I half rise from my seat. I gaze at him with astonished, dilated eyes. Those brilliant orbs of his seem to burn me as they rest upon my guilty, conscious face; a little mocking smile curves the Baronet's lips.

By what means has he become possessed of those dangerous facts, which I thought were known only to Julian Tressider, and what use does he intend to make of his knowledge?

"What do you mean?" I gasp. "I—I don't understand!"

"Of course not," he replies lightly, a mocking inflection in his voice; "how should you? I was wrong to speak of riddles. Those things which occurred on Dartmoor are hardly worth mention, save as local phenomena."

He changes the subject adroitly, yet I feel convinced that he knows the exact part I took in aiding Julian Tressider to escape, and that he has purposely led up to these remarks.

Does he intend to hold his knowledge over me, to impress me with a sense of the power he wields—the penalty he can, if he likes, bring down upon me?

My spirit rises at this idea. I set him quietly at defiance by refusing to give him any more dances, and saying as little as possible to him during the rest of the evening.

"Who is Sir Percy Delahaye?" I inquire of the Signora, during our homeward drive.

"He belongs to a very old, Staffordshire family," is the reply. "He has only recently succeeded to the estate. It is a very poor property. Beyond that title and the estate there was little for him to inherit. But I hear that a year or two previous, a distant relative bequeathed him a legacy of ninety thousand pounds. I am glad of it. Sir Percy is a clever, agreeable young man. He ought to make his way in the world."

I do not echo the favorable opinion of the Baronet. I lie awake half the night wondering how he became possessed of my secret, and what use he will make of it.

I am fated to see a great deal more of Sir

Percy Delahaye. He calls frequently at the Signora's residence after our first meeting. He pays me marked attention. Hothouse flowers and fruit, new music, tickets for concerts and operas, are among the offerings I receive from him. I would fain refuse them all, disliking and doubting the man as I do; yet he often comes so openly, he makes so little secret of his predilection for me, that I cannot even resent either the attention or the gifts, without offending the Baronet.

Sir Percy makes no further allusion to the episode on Dartmoor. He never attempts to lead up to it again after the first occasion, and I am at a loss to understand his silence, or to ascertain how much he knows respecting Julian Tressider's antecedents.

Fortunately for me, the Professor becomes alarmed at the Baronet's attentions to me, grow more obvious. He fears lest we should fall in love, lest Sir Percy should ask me to become his wife, and thereby put an end to my projected public career.

Once alive to this possibility, the Professor manœuvres to keep us apart, an attempt in which I gladly aid and abet him. Yet even now I have to endure Sir Percy's society far too frequently for my peace of mind.

As the time appointed for my *début* draws nigh my suspense increases. To fall now would be terrible indeed. I am to make my first appearance at Covent Garden in a new opera by one of the most eminent of modern composers. The principal rôle in it is not, of course, assigned to me. A mean of song has consented to take it. Mine is only a secondary part, yet of sufficient importance to render my success or failure, n. i. decisive.

The eventful night arrives. The fact has been generally circulated in musical coteries that a pupil of Signor Paoli's is to make her *début* in the new opera entitled *Pauline*. A cultivated critical audience, accustomed to the finished efforts of the most talented artists, fills the vast open house. These men and women are in reality my judges; yet I do not lose nerve. I have so much at stake that I feel strong my to do my utmost to avoid failure.

My nerves are at high tension as I leave the dressing-room.

I hear my name called; I advance on to the stage. For the first time I stand there, facing the footlights and that vast, silent audience. I try to forget that sea of faces, to concentrate my thoughts upon the character I am personating—that of a girl who resents the man she loves from a position of extreme peril.

It bears some analogy, perhaps, to the episode on Dartmoor in which I figured once. At any rate, I throw myself into it with a force, a realism, that carries all before it.

I render the music allotted to me as if the passionate words came straight from my heart.

As I sing my courage rises with my voice. As if in a dream, I hear the ringing plaudits, and dimly understand they are intended for me.

I respond to the *encore*, clamorously demanded.

When the queen of song has received her usual ovation, I am called before the curtain to receive yet another round of encouraging applause, and the most superb, banquet that falls at my feet comes from the box in which Sir Percy Delahaye is seated with a party of friends.

I feel dizzy, confused, exhausted, as someone leads me off.

The Professor, beside himself with delight and satisfaction, takes me in his arms, and kisses me in demonstrative Italian fashion. Then he hands me over to the Signora, and I am promptly conveyed home, weary, but oh! so thankful and triumphant. Only one regret lessens the joy consequent upon my success—that Julian Tressider was not there to witness it.

CHAPTER V.

My success is an established fact. The critics have reviewed me favourably. One even alludes to me as a new star in the operatic firmament.

While pointing out certain defects of style, execution, and so on; they combine in praising my voice as a soprano of rare compass and quality.

Signor Paoli is complimented upon his pupil's brilliant *début*; and if my head were not firmly fastened on it would certainly be turned with all the flattery and homage I receive.

From being a mere nobody, the new singer becomes the rage.

More than one continental manager is desirous of engaging me, but with this I have nothing to do at present. For the next three years the Professor will manage all business matters connected with my career. I am not a free agent.

I still study hard beneath his tuition, yet the attributes of success are mine, and I am very happy.

Petted, feted, caressed, with more than one possible lover, only the absence of any knowledge respecting Julian Tressider's fate tends to darken the sunlight now flooding my life with its radiance.

Strange as it may seem, my love for him grows stronger and deeper, although we have met but twice, and neither word nor token from him has come to help keep it alive.

For his dear sake the tender, persuasive speeches uttered by other lips fall flat and unmeaningless upon my ear. The admiration and love for myself which I read in other men's eyes fail to evoke any responsive thrill.

I am deemed cold and heartless, devoid of all fervour apart from my profession.

Heartless! Well, if so, it is because the heart has been stolen from out my breast, and I cannot recover it.

My stage name, by which the public recognise me, is Beatrice D'Artois. When I read it extensively advertised in the newspapers, and upon street hoardings and sandwich-boards, I can hardly realise that it belongs to me, Stella Brookfield.

Ere many weeks have elapsed, the Professor's fears are verified—Sir Philip Delahaye proposes to me.

I soon set them at rest again, however, by rejecting the Baronet as decisively as possible. I tell him that we can never be any more to each other than we are at present.

His dark, handsome face grows livid as he listens to my words.

"Stella, I love you!" he says, passionately; "and I have never allowed any obstacle to stand between me and the object of my desire. Sooner or later I shall overcome your objections, and you will consent to share my life. You are the first, the only woman I have ever sought to marry, and I shall not lightly relinquish you!"

"Then it is to be a trial of strength between your will and mine!" I answer defiantly. "I shall come off victor, Sir Percy—not you—in this contest."

He regards me with an angry, lowering expression. He would fain prolong the discussion, but the Signora's, to me, welcome entrance puts a stop to it. A kind of armed neutrality is established between the Baronet and myself, after this. I know he is on the look-out for an opportunity to renew his suit, and I do my utmost to prevent it from arriving.

The London season over, I enjoy a much-needed rest. The Paolis take me with them to a quiet French watering-place for a month. When the Professor informs me, one morning, that he is in correspondence with a well-known operatic manager who intends to organise a powerful company for a tour through South America, my heart bounds with wild sudden hope.

Julian Tressider went to America. What

if I am destined to meet him there? True, America is a wide place, but distance cannot alter the decrees of fate, and I have become strongly impregnated with fatalism of late.

I express my willingness to accept the professed engagement to travel with the company now being formed. The preliminaries with regard to salary, travelling expenses, and so on, being arranged to Signor Paoli's satisfaction, I sign the agreement, and the Signora busies herself in preparing for my departure.

The Professor places me in the care of the manager's wife, a pleasant middle-aged lady—non-professional—who is to accompany us. Our *répertoire* is a large and varied one. I am expected to sustain several of the leading *rôles*. My fame has gone before me across the Atlantic, and I have now a reputation to uphold. I study hard during the voyage out, the sweet, secret hope of once more encountering the man I love ever resting at my heart.

South America, when reached, seems to me an earthly paradise. The deep blue skies, the radiant sunlight, the picturesque scenery, inspire me with a sense of renewed, intensified life. Large audiences await us in every town, and I win fresh laurels. Indeed, ours may be called a triumphal progress, so favourable is the reception accorded to us. I like these large-hearted, kindly, albeit critical Americans, who offer me fresh homage, yet I am very far from feeling happy. Every night I scan the audience eagerly from the stage to see if I can discern Julian Tressider's face among those present. Every night I am doomed to suffer a fresh disappointment.

To my bitter annoyance, Sir Percy Delahaye, who is well known to the manager, joined us unexpectedly in New Orleans. He announces his intention of accompanying us to Florida, where, as he avers, capital sport is to be had, both large and small game abounding.

He is but an indifferent sportsman. I recognise this to be merely an excuse. I am responsible for his trip to America, and the knowledge that he has arrived to inflict his unwelcome society upon me again, when I had congratulated myself at having got rid of him for a long period, renders the Baronet more hateful to me than ever. I am fearful lest any scandal should attach itself to my name through his rash act in coming out after me. By way of reprisal I shun, and avoid him. I gave him plainly to understand that his suit is hopeless; yet he is persistent, and refuses to be shaken off.

(To be continued.)

LUIDUILTE'S LOVERS.

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CHAPTER IX.—(continued.)

THOUGH Luiduite had been at Dene Hall nearly two weeks, neither Lady Vermont nor her son had called, though all the other county families had left their cards. Mlle. D'Alma was puzzled, but Luiduite felt that she knew the reason only too well.

One morning, feeling a craving to be alone, Luiduite stole out of the house before anyone was stirring, making her way down the Cedar avenue, from the end of which was a splendid view of the surrounding country.

It was fair, still morning, with just warmth enough to be pleasant. A faint haze hanging over the tall tree-tops seemed to add to the quiet.

She leaned over the low railings, watching with sombre eyes the golden lights rising behind the hills that heralded the coming of the sun.

The quiet of the morning stole into her heart as she stood there alone with her thoughts, when, suddenly, there rose before her the form of a man. And a man's face, pale, haggard, with sorrowful blue eyes, and soft,

curling golden hair about the white brows, confronted her.

A kind of shock went through her as she beheld the changed face of her one-time lover. Could this be Lianoe, whose bright debonair face and manner had first won her heart, and why did he look so? A cold, hard, proud feeling took possession of her, as all she had suffered through him, flashed across her mind. He should see that he could not take her up, and then throw her away at his own pleasure. He should see that all love of him had died from her heart!

"Ah, Luiduite, why do your red lips grow pale and rigid? Why do your hands grow cold and nervous, and your eyes dark with sad memories? Is it thus we look and feel when meeting those for whom love is dead?"

"Great Heaven! Luiduite!" exclaimed Lord Vermont, starting forward with outstretched hands, a light of gladness leaping to his blue eyes. "At last!"

"Did you not know I was here? We came home—my aunt, my betrothed husband and myself—over a fortnight ago!" spoke the rich voice Lianoe had yearned to hear all these months; and as the sweet, cold tones fell upon his ear they seemed to sting as the lash of the whip.

"No, I have only just returned from London," he said. "Luiduite, what do you mean by speaking of your betrothed? Who is it?"

"Have you not heard?" she asked, with a cold, fleeting smile. "You seem buried out of the way of all news here. Colonel Dalziel and I are to be married this month! So you see, the weddings of the two friends will be very close!"

"I do not understand," began Lianoe, her glance and manner leaving no room for doubt that she meant himself, but she interrupted with a haughty wave of her small white hand.

"There is no riddle contained in my words, my lord. And now will you pardon me if I leave you. There is the breakfast bell. I hope Lady Vermont will honour me with a call, as she, and my aunt, are such old friends!" and with a bow, as cold and distant as her voice, Luiduite turned away.

"Luiduite!" cried Lianoe, passionately; but the girl pretended not to hear.

What could he have to say to her that would be worth the hearing? He, the betrothed of another woman, and—

She dared not trust herself in his presence any longer, lest he should read in her eyes all that he yet was to her.

At breakfast she made no mention of having seen Lord Vermont; but her aunt and the Colonel saw that she had been agitated by the restless movements of the slender hands, and the continual flow of conversation that she managed to keep up.

The Colonel felt that she had seen or spoken with Lianoe; but no fear came to his wicked, sinful heart.

He read her pride in every turn of the haughty, dark head; in every flash of the brilliant dark eyes.

He did not ask any questions, feeling that it would be better to appear unconscious.

Their wedding-day was very near. After that he cared not for any man.

So he told himself. But he forgot, in the arrogance of his joy, that there was one who could strike at any time—swiftly, suddenly, surely.

October passed slowly away, bringing with it its changes of cold north-winds, shortening days, and loss of flowers.

And Luiduite, beloved by all her tenants, the envied of many, felt that she would gladly lay down her tired head beside that of the dying year.

The struggle to appear always happy, feign cold indifference to the man who won her life's love, was almost more than could stand.

Many and many a time there rose in her heart the cry of the poet,—

" My heart was hot and restless,
And my life was full of care;
And the burden laid upon me
Seemed greater than I could bear."

Miss Dene, the beautiful heiress, was courted and sought after in a manner that had not her mind been turned to her own sorrows, might have fairly bewildered her.

As it was, each fresh invitation sent a sickening dread through her, for at all these haunting dinners and musical parties Lord Vermont was sure to be present; and though she effectually prevented his obtaining any private conversation, she could not keep aloof without attracting notice.

And so the day of her wedding drew near. The Countess and her son, Francois, had come over to be present; and Mlle. D'Almaise had felt she could not well omit inviting her old friend, Lady Vermont; and she had accepted, not knowing aught of that other ceremony, in which her son had figured as one of the principals.

At first, Lady Vermont had appeared somewhat cold and distant in her manner to the young heiress; but that had all vanished now, and she, in concert with all who knew Luiduite, had grown to love her dearly.

Colonel Dalziel and Lianoe never spoke, save in company; but if Luiduite had known, it would only have seemed natural after all that had occurred; only the passionate looks of hatred that passed when they accidentally met in private would have startled her considerably.

The morning of her wedding broke, cold and fine, with a pale sunlight resting on the hill-tops, and slanting across the fair valleys in the distance.

How different this wedding to that other! There hung her bridal robe of pure white satin, with its loops and masses of rich lace; the bridal veil and wreath; and down in the great reception-room the scene was like fair-land, where, in a few hours, she would plight her troth to a man for whom she had no love.

She thought of that other morning in sunny France, as she went to her window, and gazed out over the fair landscape. And as she stood there a sudden pain shot through her heart, driving all the colour from the fair face, and leaving it quivering and grey. It passed swiftly as it came, but left her trembling and cold.

" My nerves will give way soon," she told herself. " It is well that I am to be married to-day. I could not bear another month like this last has been!"

Then her thoughts wandered off to the past.

How could Lianoe, who had seemed all that was true and noble, have acted so despicable a part?

She could see now that he had been weak, in that he had not sought her openly and boldly of her aunt. But still he was true then. What could have caused the change?

She had often wondered during these days why she never heard any mention of Lord Vermont's fiancee, nor ever saw her; but she had concluded that she must be the daughter and heiress of Lord Clarendon, whose grounds adjoined Lord Vermont's on the right, and this young lady was now from home.

She turned away from the window with a weary sigh, as the sound of merry voices came along the wide corridor that led to her own especial apartments; and she半 grimly when her bridesmaids entered, bright and glesful, to assist her maid in robing her. The proud face was very calm and quiet during the long and tedious process, the dark eyes alone showing the war within; then came the summons below, and Luiduite passed along the corridor, the painted faces of her ancestors looking down grimly upon this vision in white satin and jewels, with the cold, lovely face. Stray beams of pale-golden sunlight struck in through the long, old-fashioned windows, falling on the white-robed figure as it passed.

No colour came to the clear cheeks when

she entered the room, and all eyes were turned upon her. She cast one swift glance round, and saw, that, though Lady Vermont was one of those assembled there, her son did not make one of the guests, and a thrill of relief passed through her.

Calmly and quietly, no falter in the sweet, clear tones, she spoke the words that bound her for life to Colonel Gregory Dalziel.

Those who saw Luiduite that day said that never had she looked so beautiful, never had the rich voice sounded so purely sweet and clear; yet there was a look not of joy in the dusty eyes, and the voice was vibrating with some emotion they could not fathom; but they remembered it afterward, and some there were whose eyes grew dim at the thought of her fair, ruined life.

There was, of course, a superb luncheon, during which Luiduite Dalziel sat proud, yet gracious, beside Francois Rouget. The Colonel's best-man having fallen ill, he had very unwillingly taken his place.

It was over at last, and she was free to go to her room.

The bridesmaids were about to follow, when she turned to them, saying, quietly,—

" I wish to dress myself, and would rather be alone."

They all fell back at the proud, cold manner, and Luiduite left them, waiting not for remonstrance or appeal.

A wild longing to be alone had come to her—alone if only for a few minutes—to think over what this thing was that she had done. She could as yet scarcely realise the truth, that Colonel Dalziel was in very deed her lawful husband, who she had wedded of her own free will.

Where was Lianoe? What was this strange numbing pain in her side? Was this some awful dream from which she would awake to find herself still in the old chateau at—, waiting for Lianoe's return?

A hurried knock at the door made her start to her feet; and crossing the apartment she threw the door open, half impatiently, and encountered Francois Rouget, his face full of horror and pain, his whole manner fraught with agitation.

" Lianoe has told me all!" he said, in constrained tones. " And I have come to bid you to grant him a last interview. He is in the library. Go to him! It is his due."

As one in a dream Luiduite obeyed the stern command, and once more the sunbeams caressed the royal head, with its dark coronet of glossy hair. Again the handsome, pictured face stared in unmeaning, grimness upon the tall, graceful, white-robed figure as Luiduite went swiftly, yet noiselessly, to meet the reproaches of the man she had called husband for a few brief days.

Sunlight gleam your brightest, hide in the meshes of rich lace, look into the depths of those haunted eyes, merrily, lovingly fall round the fair face and stately head so stately, and, as in benediction, to-morrow it will be too late.

On reaching the library Luiduite paused a moment; then throwing her head back with a passionate, proud gesture, she turned the handle and entered.

Lianoe stood near the window, where the bright pale light fell upon his golden head and pale, haggard face. He started forward as she entered, words falling in passionate incoherence from his stiff, white lips.

" Luiduite!" he cried, " I thought you loved me in those old days in beautiful France! I have nearly died under the torture of finding you foolish; and now, darling, though it is too late I know that you have been pure—pure, as I ever deemed you! " See, I have just had this given into my hands by Francois Rouget. He found it on the rug outside Colonel Dalziel's room, and I can now see all the devilish plot he hatched in order to win you from me!"

He held out a letter addressed to herself in his own handwriting, and she took it, still as one in a dream. Its contents were as follows:

" **MY DARLING.**—I may not add the sweet word ' wife,' the sweetest in all our grand language—for Colonel Dalziel writes me to say that he has discovered our marriage to be illegal! But my sister is better, and my mother has been making a harmless little plot to induce me to marry a young lady who has spent all, or nearly all, her life abroad. She is beautiful, rich, and her lands adjoin ours; and the name of this young lady is Luiduite Dene! Oh, my love! How I long to take you to her and tell of our love! Every moment of absence from you is a moment lost, for without you I do not live—I merely exist! Do not say a word to Mlle. ; we will make our confession to both our dear ones together. Ever your **" LLANOE."**

She stood like a marble statue, her dark eyes hungrily reading the written words; only the deep, uneven breathing speaking of life in that marvellously-beautiful form. Then she raised her head, looking up at him with an expression of horror and misery in her eyes that haunted him for ever.

" Oh, Lianoe! Lianoe! my love!" she cried. " You were true! It is he, the man whom I have made my husband, who was, and is, false! Lianoe!" the sweet voice thrilled through the quiet room, where the afternoon sun was revelling, with pitous, despairing entreaty; " Lianoe, what shall I do? Oh, Heaven! Is there no release?"

She put out her arms in a blind, helpless way, tottering forward. For a moment she stood before him with that awful anguish in her dark eyes; then the tall figure swayed, and before Lianoe could prevent her fall, Luiduite lay a heap of gleaming white satin and glittering pearls at his feet.

He stooped like a man in a dream, and raised the dark, glossy head, with its diadem of pearls. He rained passionate, despairing kisses on the cold, white brow, cold and white as her gems. But the sweet lips were mute; the dark, wondrous eyes had closed for ever! Heaven had sent release, and the aching, troubled heart had found peace with its Maker.

Lianoe never knew how long he knelt there with his dead-white love in his arms; but he became suddenly aware of a noise and confusion, and looking up, met the affrighted gaze of a hundred pair of eyes, foremost among which were those of Colonel Dalziel; and as he saw the look of agonised longing and pain in those cold, grey eyes his anger vanished.

The guilty wretch had found his punishment. He rose from beside the still form of the Colonel's bride, and faced him.

" There is your wife's dead form!" he said, his voice sounding odd, even to himself; " but you know her love was mine! Rather than let such sacrilege be, God has taken her to Himself."

Then he turned away, leaving the horror-stricken bridegroom standing looking down, in unavailing remorse, upon that cold, beautiful thing that, one short hour ago, had been so full of warm life.

Fair, proud, mistaken Luiduite!

[THE END.]

NOVELETTE—concluded.]

POOR LITTLE VAL.

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CHAPTER VI.—(continued.)

" It would not be kind to consent," Val said, steadily, " because I should make you very unhappy. No man could be otherwise, knowing, as you would, that his wife's heart was entirely devoted to another; and I—oh! I should feel I had sinned beyond pardon—for it would be a sin to marry you, loving him the whole while."

He knew then he could not shake her fixed resolve, and, for a moment, knelt beside her

in wordless agony; but he was a brave man, and presently he lifted his head with a gesture of impatience at his own weakness and pain.

"I accept my dismissal. I was a fool to speak; now I have only one thing to ask of you. Do not let the knowledge of my love spoil our friendship. Let me feel in all things I am your friend, your adviser, your protector. Let me exert my powers to find you some happier and more congenial home."

He rose as he spoke, and stood looking down upon her, infinite love and pity in his eyes.

"You are most good, most good! and I will trust you in all things! Oh, Mr. Nathan, if you could find me some employment, however menial, I would be glad."

"I will do my best; but you are fit only for the lightest labour. You look as though a breath too strong would blow you away."

"Sometimes," she said gently and dreamily, "sometimes I think I shall trouble no one very long."

Without a word he turned from her, his heart torn with sudden fear. A mist was before his eyes, and he seemed choking. Before he could conquer his emotion she spoke again.

"You are sorry for me, and you should be glad; glad to think all my loneliness, all my shame and sorrow, are nearly over. Oh! it has all been so cruel," and then she laid her face on her arms and wept like a tired child, whilst he stood by unable to comfort her, not daring to speak an endearing word, or offer one caress. But she grew quiet in a little while, and moving slowly, wearily, towards him, put out her hand.

"Heaven bless you!" she said, softly. "Heaven bless you for all your kindness! Now I would like to go to my room. I am very, very weary."

He stooped and kissed her brow.

"All happiness go with you," he said, and set her free. She toiled up to her own room, feeling heavy-hearted and thoroughly ill. Her limbs ached, her eyes burned with unnatural fire, and a small bright spot burned on either cheek. Flinging herself on her bed she tried to sleep, but her head ached too badly, and she lay tossing to and fro through the long hours of the long, cold night.

When morning came she was too ill to go down. Mrs. Byford was wrath, declaring, in her coarse way, that the girl was only "shamming," and but for Nathan Levi she would have remained unattended, uncared for. He insisted a doctor should be called, and provided such luxuries as invalids need. A rosy faced girl was brought out of the village to attend on Val, much to Mrs. Byford's disgust, and she heartily longed for the termination of her cousin's visit. Val's malady was called "low fever, consequent on mental trouble and exposure to the elements"; but the doctor frankly informed Mr. Levi that his patient had little or no strength to stand against her illness, and he was afraid it would develop into consumption. It was pitiful to see the man at that time. He haunted the corridor, in which Val's room was situated, and would steal noiselessly to her door a dozen times a-day to listen if all were well with her.

Very, very slowly she crept back to some semblance of health, and in a day or two would take her accustomed place downstairs. Nathan Levi was filled with a great and unreasonable joy, which he was at no pains to conceal; and, as Rebecca wholly forbade him to visit Val, he sent her a note by her maid, in which he prayed her, for her own sake, to reconsider her decision, because, only as his wife could he effectually shield her, urging that she was not strong enough to gain her own livelihood, and that he asked so little in return for his own devotion.

And whilst she sat reading it and wondering over such unselfish love, pitying the writer with all her heart, Rebecca Byford entered noiselessly, and, standing behind Val's chair, mastered those written sentences.

She was mad with anger. Who was this girl that she should usurp the fortune Lydia

and she were to possess between them? It should never be, and, in an access of fury, she spoke Val's name, coupled with an opprobrious word.

The frightened girl started to her feet, and stood dazed and trembling, whilst the other poured out a storm of angry invectives and reproaches.

"Madam! madam!" she cried, at last. "You do not know what you are saying! This is most cruel! most vile!"

Rebecca lifted her strong, white hand and struck the girl fiercely across the cheek. With a low, wild cry Val turned and fled, never pausing until she reached the breakfast room, where Nathan sat reading. She ran to him, and, falling in a huddled heap at his feet, prayed, wildly,

"Take me away! Oh! take me away from this dreadful house!"

He lifted her gently, easily—she was so pitifully light—and drew her down on his knee, then his eyes fell upon those scarlet marks staining the whiteness of her cheek, and a great anger seized him.

"You poor child! You poor child!" he murmured, caressing her beautiful child. "How they have frightened you! But you are safe now. Try to be calm, and tell me all about it—what you would have me do?"

CHAPTER VII.

He did not then plead his own cause; he was too brave and generous to take advantage of her misery and fear.

She was frail and timid. It was enough at this hour that he could be her shield and protector.

He soothed her like a child; and, when she had grown quiet, won from her the history of Rebecca's outrage. When she had finished the disgraceful story he said,—

"It is very clear, child, you cannot remain here."

"I am glad you have arrived at that decision," sneered Rebecca from the doorway, "as I have come to inform you my house is no longer a shelter for Miss Dalton. I have too much respect for myself longer to harbour one who is a disgrace to her family."

Val clung about Nathan Levi.

"Take me away!" she reiterated, and, patting her shoulder reassuringly, answered his cousin,—

"We are ready and willing to go with all possible speed. Please see that Miss Dalton's trunks are packed at once; and, with your permission, Rebecca, I will take charge of those ornaments you have been pleased to appropriate to yourself. Do not make a scene," and there was such a dangerous gleam in the dark eyes that the crestfallen woman went to obey him, returning in a short while with Val's little store of jewellery.

"I was in a passion," she began, apologetically, but her cousin stopped her by an imperative gesture.

"I wish to hear nothing you have to say. You can say nothing that would extenuate your conduct. I must request the loan of the chaise. Miss Dalton cannot walk to the station," and when they were once more alone he turned to Val with gentle courtesy and deference. "I am waiting your instructions, dear. Unfortunately, I know of no place where you could be comfortably settled, although I will exert myself to find you a home. It is for the present I am so nonplussed."

"I will go to Boxer," she answered. "They will give me welcome, and I should like to die among them," and, when he looked at her, it seemed to him the hand of death was already upon her. But he spoke calmly and even cheerfully of their journey; and, on studying his Bradshaw, found they could catch the last train to Boxer, which place they would reach a little before dusk.

Carefully folding her wraps about her he led her out, and soon they were bowling along the

unlovely road, and Val had looked her last on the Grey House in the Hollow.

She had not seen her grandfather at the last, he having sent a message that he did not wish to be disturbed.

Nathan Levi secured a compartment, and proceeded to make his companion as comfortable as circumstances would permit.

She was very quiet now, seeming exhausted by her previous emotion; and, as he preserved silence, she presently fell asleep.

He sat watching her with loving, hungering eyes, that great and ever-increasing fear tearing at his heart strings.

Oh! it was hard she should die—so young, so pure, so good! He prayed for her life then, as he never had prayed before, and strove with all his might to believe that she might yet be spared.

At the first station where they halted she woke, and he left her to get wine, and to telegraph the news of her coming to Mrs. Eastlake.

She drank the wine with a sort of pathetic submission to his will, and thanked him gently for his forethought; but he was alarmed to find her so much weaker and wearier than when they started.

"Once among your friends you will soon be well. We shall have you quite strong again," he said, with a wistfulness in his deep voice that touched her, almost to tears.

"Oh, yes; I shall soon be well," she answered, in her desire to comfort him. "What a great trouble I am to you!"

"Then you are the sweetest trouble ever a man had! Oh, child! oh, child! if it could have been otherwise! There, do not vex yourself about me—you must try to look your best, or all your kind friends will be alarmed, and you must make me known to the beautiful Guinevere. I shall like her for your sake."

She listened with a smile about her pale lips—a smile so sad, and yet so sweet, that he scarce could bear to look at her.

The faint, momentary flush his words had called into her cheeks died out, leaving her wan and white. But she stretched out her hand to him, saying,—

"Dear and true friend! they shall thank you for all your services. They are wiser than I, and will know best how to show their gratitude. Oh, I would like to live until I had done some great thing for you—but—but," and she broke off suddenly.

"Do not distress yourself!" he entreated. "You are young, and may yet outlive this weakness."

She shook her head.

"No, you must not deceive yourself; and I shall not be sorry to go. The world has not been a paradise to me."

For the remainder of the journey she was silent, and he saw with concern that her face grew more and more wan in its pallor; that life itself seemed at fault in her."

At last they reached Boxer, and as he assisted her from the carriage a young lady, beautiful as a poet's dream, hurried forward.

"Valentine, little Val!"

And Nathan guessed this was Guinevere Grant.

She cared little for those around as she took the small, white face between her hands, and kissed it fondly.

"Oh, you dear! you dear! what have they done to you?"

And then, as if ashamed of the tears in her beautiful eyes, began to speak in a rapid fashion,—

"I would let no one else meet you. I wanted to have you all to myself, so I begged the carriage, which is now waiting to convey us home. Come, Val!" and she looked a little disappointed by the girl's quiet manner.

When they were seated she addressed Nathan for the first time,—

"She is looking dreadfully ill! Is she always so quiet now? Oh, the poor child! How thin she has grown!"

"She has been very, very ill, Miss Grant. You must avoid all excitement for her."

"I am afraid you are troubling, too much about me," the girl said, gently. "I shall do very well, now, dear Guinevere; and I am too happy for much speech."

She lay back, amongst her pillows, very white and death-like, and her breath came gaspingly. All her heart was crying for "Eric, Eric!" and the madness of the joy of seeing him once again made her sick and faint.

Mrs. Eastlake ran down the steps to meet the travellers, and her face grew pale as she saw how frail Val had grown.

Nathan lifted her out, and the elder lady kissed her warmly.

But the dark eyes gazed beyond her, beyond the beautiful figures of the sisters waiting her in the hall, resting at last on the dear face, more to her, oh! so much more, than all the world beside; and she hardly knew in what wise she climbed the steps. She only felt he was near; she only knew she loved him.

Through a mist of tears she saw his out-stretched hand, and heard his kindly voice; and sobbing out, "Eric, Eric! let me die amongst you!" fell forward. And as she fell, he caught her in his strong arms, and carrying her into a room, laid her upon a couch, leaving her to his mother's care.

The spring passed and summer came with all its golden glory, its divine rays of light and warmth, its half-red, half-sweet, and wholly-tender evenings; and with each passing day Val's little strength grew less.

They all knew and recognised the truth now. They all knew that before the summer months were dead she would be gone from their midst.

It seemed cruel, almost, to wish to keep her back from that other world.

She had suffered so much and so long; she was so willing, nay, wishful to go. She could look now with unclouded eyes upon Eric's love and Guinevere's happiness. She even wished the marriage should not be postponed for her sake; and then Guinevere had knelt, weeping, beside her, praying she would not bring of such things now; accusing herself bitterly of wrecking her friend's life, and refusing for very long to be comforted.

They brought her summer's choicest gifts of flowers and fruit.

One and all vied with each other to minister to her wants.

She did not keep her room; and it was a sad pleasure to Eric and Nathan Levi to carry her up and down stairs.

Mrs. Eastlake and her son had insisted the Jew should stay with them "until all was over"; and he was soon a valued friend of the family, the object of much affectionate solicitude and compassion.

Slowly and peacefully the young life was ebbing.

She suffered, no pain, now, and there were days when she was sufficiently well to be carried into the beautiful, old-fashioned gardens.

But, with passing time, they grew less and less frequent, until one day in early August, whilst the reapers are making merriment in the fields, they found Val too ill to rise, and then they knew the end was very near.

That day she asked Nathan to draw up a will for her. She had so little to leave, but that little had been precious to her, and would be valued for her sake.

Her pearls she gave to Guinevere; "it was right his wife should wear them."

There were trifles for Maude, and Gertrude; a set of emeralds for Mrs. Eastlake, and two volumes of poems for Eric.

"And, nothing for me?" pleaded poor Nathan; "no memorial of you, my darling?"

She turned her wistful, pitiful eyes upon him.

"You cannot be exceptions and legatees too,"

smiling faintly. "But you shall choose something for yourself."

He lifted a tress of her beautiful hair, and pressed his lips reverently to it; then said, "Give me this Val only this."

She bade him bring scissors and sever it from her head, then adding—

"I owe you so much, I have given you so little. Let me make you what offering I can. This was my mother's, my poor, despaired, sorrowful mother's, and had been dear to me—take it!" She gave a small, well-worn Bible into his hands. "When you look at it, think pitifully of her, and painlessly of her child."

"Oh Heaven! oh Heaven!" he groaned, "if I could but keep you here, my darling, my angel."

"Wishes are so vain," she said, gently, "and I am glad to go—yes, glad now, although it was hard at first. Oh dear friend! oh true friend! Heaven bless you now and always!"

"Val!" he whispered, brokenly, "kiss me but once. Let me have some comforting thought when you are gone;" and his humble, agonised face was full of passionate entreaty. She lifted herself among her pillows, and tenderly laid her mouth to his mouth in a light caress; then, flushing hotly, drew away from him, but the man's heavy heart was comforted.

Late at night Eric sat alone with her, and she talked of old dead days, of old dead joys and pleasures in a quiet, peaceful fashion, and when he rose to go she clung to his hand a moment.

"Eric, do not let them take this from me when I am dead," and she pointed to the ring he had given her as sign and seal of their love. "I could not bear another woman should wear it. I could not bear to part with it, even in death."

"It shall go with you to the grave," he answered unsteadily. "Oh, Val, oh! little Val, if we could but have kept you with us; Why did you ever leave us? Perhaps had you stayed this awful thing would have been averted. Poor child! dear heart! forgive me, that ever I cast a shadow over your life."

"Hush! Heaven gave you to me a little while, to be a joy and a blessing to me; and even when all was ended, my bliss, my hope (but never my love). I was the better for once having been your chosen wife, for having been thought worthy to fill so high a place. Now, dear one, go. I am weary, and it is growing late."

Just as the first grey streak of the summer dawn lit up the darkness of the sky there rose a cry of alarm in the house; then the hurrying of steps through the long corridors, as figures grey and ghostly in the uncertain light hastened to Valentine's room. Alas! alas! it needed very little experience to tell the watchers how near was the end. In a moment Eric had lifted the feeble form and drawn the dark head up to his breast. The dew of death was on the placid forehead, but the eyes—those loving, lovely eyes—shone still with the lustre of a deathless love, and as they met his they faintly smiled. He bowed over her and kissed the cold lips, whilst a sob he could not repress broke from him.

"Val! dear Val! say one word to us before you go—one word of pardon to me."

Oh! the light in her eyes! the sweetness of her smile!

"My dear one—my dear one!" she said again and again, and then possessing herself of his hand, with one last effort she laid it upon Guinevere's as if in blessing, and strove to speak, but could not. So they watched her whilst the dawn broadened and brightened, whilst the flowers opened to the rising sun, and the birds began to waken and sing amongst the leafy boughs. And soon there came that last great awful change which none could mistake. Maude cowered down beside her sister, and the maid drew deep gasping breaths, but no one spoke, no one cried out. It was

over very soon—all—all over. The sweet soul had flown, and the tired body lay cold and motionless, beyond all pain, all shame and weariness now.

When Maude, stole into the darkened room, with her last offering of roses, she saw a man's figure kneeling beside her coffin, heard a man's voice lifted in bitter grief; and quietly retreating closed the door. Her own eyes were wet, her own heart heavy, for she had not been always kind to the dead girl. But now she kept them all away from that shadowed room, feeling Nathan Levi's grief was sacred, that no words could assuage or comfort it, and so they,

"Let rest the strong man weeping there."

[THE END.]

FACETIA.

OLD LADY: "My dear, do you really think you are fit to become a minister's wife?" Engaged, niece: "Yes, indeed, I don't mind being talked about at all."

EDITH: "Do you think that Emily Thumpist is going to make a success of her typewriting?" Maud: "Shouldn't wonder. They say her employer goes home every day with a very thoughtful and absent-minded air."

Laura (to her best man): "There now, Henry dear, don't saw on that violin any more; it sets my teeth on edge." Bob (from behind the door): "She means on the edge of the washstand; I saw 'em there last night."

CUSTOMER (in restaurant): "Look here, waiter, I can't drink this coffee; it's as weak as dishwater and as cold as milk." Waiter (measuringly): "Yes, sir. It is a little weak, I suppose; but just see what a big cup you've got!"

FURZONSONS: "Did you go to the theatre last evening, Percy?" Mr. Brown: "No; I attended in a slight-of-hand performance." "Where?" "I went to call on Miss Lee Smythe, and offered her my hand, but she slighted it."

"How do you like me in my new ball dress, John?" asked the young wife. "O you look beautiful," replied the young husband; "but you are wrong in asking how you look in it." "Why?" "Because you are head and shoulders out of it."

BROWN (producing his scrap book, and pointing with pride to one of his early effusions): "There, read that! I wrote that when I was only twelve years old!" Fogg (after reading): "Can it be possible, Brown, that you were so old as twelve when you wrote this?"

"I CAN tell you, my dear," said a wife of a year's standing to one just newly married, "it's one thing to manage a sweetheart, and another to manage a husband." "Oh, I shan't have any trouble about that," said the happy bride. "Ma takes that all off my hands. She's had practice."

"WHAT a seeming trifles may save a man's life, Bramley! I read here that a half crown in a man's waistcoat pocket turned the bullet aside!" "Such a trifles would never save my life, Darringer," "Why wouldn't it?" "Because you might perforate me with bullets, and you'd never strike a half crown."

A CITIZEN who deserves well of his country had a large family, to which additions were constantly making. One day one of his little boys was thus interrogated: "Johnny, how many brothers and sisters have you got?" "I don't know," answered the boy; "I hasn't been home since morning."

"WELL, William," said Mr. Hardhead to his new confidential clerk, "you are in a first-class position now, at a good salary. I shall expect you to be faithful and diligent—in fact, to make all my interests your own. It won't be necessary, however, for you to make love to the type-writer. I'll attend to her myself."

SOCIETY.

The Duchess of Cambridge, upon the Duke of Cambridge's birthday, entertained His Royal Highness and other members of the family at dinner at her residence in the Ambassador's Court, St. James's Palace. In addition to His Royal Highness, there were present the Princess Mary Adelaide, and Princess Victoria and Prince Francis of Teck, General Sir G. B. Harman, Colonel Fitz-George, Lady Geraldine Somerset, the Hon. Mrs. Percy Mitford, General H. Fulke-Greville, and Signor Tosti. The venerable Duchess of Cambridge was rather better upon this occasion than she had been for some days past.

Count and Countess Waldersee gave a dinner in Berlin in honour of the German Emperor and Empress on the 20th ult., at which numerous ministers and generals were present, among whom were Count Herbert Bismarck and Count Moltke. General Bronsart von Schellendorf, the War Minister, was prevented from attending by indisposition.

LADY WILLIS gave a large afternoon at home at Government House, Portsmouth, recently. Amongst the guests were Admiral Sir Edmund Commerell, G.C.B., V.C., and Lady Commerell, Admiral Sir Lewis Jones, G.C.B., Admiral Sir Henry and Miss Chads, General and the Misses Chads, &c. The day being bright and sunny, some of the guests adjourned to the garden to play rounders. Several tents were erected on the lawn, and the band of the Royal Marine Artillery played a pretty selection of music. Refreshments were served in the dining-room, where the tables were prettily decorated with daffodils and ivy leaves.

The majority of the eldest son of Mr. J. P. F. Gundry, of The Hyde, Bridport, took place on the 20th ult., with great festivities for the tenantry and parishioners on the estate at Walditch and other parts of the large property, ending with a grand display of fireworks. A beautiful table, manufactured at Bridport, with inscription, was presented to Mr. Joseph Gundry on the happy occasion.

In connection with the Richmond Spring Flower Show, some successful *tableaux vivants* were given at the Castle Assembly Rooms. The entertainment was organised by Mr. W. P. Warren, who painted the scenes which formed the background to each tableau. The principal scenes were "The Prisoner of Chillon," "Dresden China," "The Silver Rhine," and "Within the Shadow of the Church." Miss Mina Vincent, Mrs. Boulter, Miss Mary Wadd, Mr. Churchward, Mr. Ellinio, and Mr. Martin were among the performers. Between the scenes songs were sung by Mme. Evelyn Green and Mr. Combe Williams, whilst Herr Mistowski gave some performances on the violin. At the close Mr. Warren was called before the curtain to receive the thanks of the audience.

The death of the Duke of Buckingham was terribly unexpected, as he had only been ill for a day or two. It was announced that Lord Beauchamp would take his place as Chairman of Committees for a few days. He was, comparatively speaking, a young man, and looked strong and vigorous. Though married twice, he had no sons, but three daughters by his first wife, a daughter of Sir Robert Bateson Heygasy, the eldest of which now becomes Baroness Kinloss in her own right. The Dukedom of Buckingham becomes extinct, but the Earldom of Temple, which is one of the oldest titles, goes to the Duke's nephew, Mr. Gore Langton, the son of his eldest sister, Lady Anna Gore Langton, and Mr. Langton married Miss Montgomery, the eldest sister of the present Duchess of Buckingham. The late Duke was a most estimable, worthy man, and his behaviour at the time of his father's death, when he succeeded to a ruined inheritance, was beyond all praise.

STATISTICS.

The new American navy, when completed, will consist of twenty-two vessels, ranging from the armoured cruiser *Marine*, carrying four hundred and forty-four men, down to a first-class torpedo boat carrying four officers and eighteen men. There will be five thousand seven hundred and eighty-six men on board the twenty-two vessels, five hundred officers, and five thousand two hundred and eighty-six sailors and marines.

DR. FRANCIS WARNER, in the *British Medical Journal*, advocates a scientific examination of all school children with reference to bodily deformities, condition of eyesight, and nervous excitability. In one of the industrial schools in Liverpool, of two hundred and eighty-one children, fourteen per cent. showed defect in the development of the nervous system; in the school for truants, of one hundred and six children, forty per cent. showed the same defect.

GEMS.

As if we did not suffer enough from the storms which beat about without, must we conspire also to harass one another?

Love never reasons, but profusely gives; gives, like a thoughtless prodigal, its all, and trembles then lest it has done too little.

Nothing can be reckoned good or bad to us in this life any farther than it prepares or indisposes us for the enjoyment of another.

ADVERSITY exasperates fools, deject cowards, draws out the faculties of the wise and industrious, puts the modest to the necessity of trying their skill, awes the opulent, and makes the idle indolent.

ABSTAINING from criticism by no means implies a tame and weak submission to evil as such. Let all proper warfare be waged against vice and crime and wrong of every kind; but for those whom we imagine to be identified with these evils let us only have charity and sympathy, and the desire to help, if possible. Their guilt in their peculiar circumstances may be far less than our own. But for their improvement and happiness we may be largely responsible. If we search for the good that is in them, if we cherish and develop it by loving and respecting it in them, and thus winning their esteem and sympathy, we may possibly disentangle them from the evil.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

OYSTER OMELET.—Chop twelve large oysters fine, beat six eggs well, add a spoonful of flour rubbed smooth in milk, salt, pepper, and a bit of butter. Fry in one omelet, and serve hot.

OYSTER TOAST.—Select fifteen plump oysters; chop them fine, and add salt, pepper, and a suspicion of nutmeg. Beat up the yolks of two eggs with a gill of cream; whisk this into the simmering oysters. When set, pour the whole over slices of buttered toast.

BROILED LIVER.—Cut liver in thin slices, scald and wipe dry, grease bars or wires of gridiron, and broil over coals until tender, but not too hard; place on a hot platter, season with butter, salt and pepper, and serve very hot. Currant jelly is a fine accompaniment to broiled liver.

OYSTER CROQUETTES.—Boil one pint of oysters three minutes in their own juice, and drain dry. Cut them in five or six pieces each. Make a very thick cream sauce of one cup of hot cream, or half milk and half cream, one tablespoonful of butter, one heaping tablespoonful of corn flour dissolved in a little cold water, and added to the boiling milk, one saltspoonful of salt, and half a cupful of white pepper, half a teaspoonful of celery salt, and a few grains of red pepper. Mix add oysters, and when cool form into rolls, egg crumb, and fry as other croquettes.

MISCELLANEOUS.

One of the greatest causes of trouble in this world is the habit people have of talking faster than they think.

AFTER all, though you may look to your understanding for amusement, it is to the affections that you must trust for happiness. These imply a spirit of self-sacrifice; and often our virtues, like our children, are endeared to us by what we suffer for them.

LITTLE FORMS OF ETIQUETTE.—Girls should be taught certain little rules of etiquette which they cannot afford to ignore. A lady once told the writer that she was much chagrined at having been guilty of not making "party calls," in a city where she had spent part of a winter and had been invited to several houses. She was refined and cultivated, but had never been much in society in large towns, and actually did not know what was expected of her until it was too late. No doubt she was considered a very rude, uncultivated person by the ladies whom she had unknowingly slighted. A good many instances have come to my knowledge since then, of young girls who have been honoured by invitations to a choice garden or indoor party, and never afterwards took the trouble to call. I have known even a more discreditable thing—it is incredible, but true, that young people have actually left such a party without taking leave of their host and hostess!

AMUSING TOASTS.—A witty toast is sure of evoking applause and promoting jollity, and good after-dinner speakers are among the most popular of men. That these flashes of wit are not always unpremeditated is a fact that does not make them less acceptable. A rather cynical toast ran thus: "Woman—she requires no eulogy; she speaks for herself." A gallant young man, under the same festive circumstances, referred to one member of the sex he eulogized as "a delectable dear, so sweet that honey would blush in her presence, and treacle stand appalled." At the marriage supper of a deaf and dumb couple, one guest, in the speech of the evening, wished them "unpeakable bliss." A writer of comedies was given a banquet in honour of his latest work, at which the jovial guest gave the toast: "The author's very good health! May he live to be as old as his jokes." At another gathering were toasted, "The bench and the bar: If it were not for the bar, there would be very little use for the bench." A pithy was the following toast, proposed at a shoemaker's dinner: "May we have all the women in the country to shoe, and all the men to boot."

DOUBLE DINNERS IN RUSSIA.—The Russian eats on an average once every two hours. The climate and custom require such frequent meals, the digestion of which is aided by frequent draughts of *vodka* and tea. *Vodka* is the Russian whisky made from potatoes and rye. It is fiery and colourless, and is generally flavored with some extract like vanilla or orange. It is drunk from small cups that hold perhaps half a gill. *Vodka* and tea are the inseparable accompaniments of friendly as well as of business intercourse in the country of the Czar. Drunken men are rare. Russia and Sweden are the only countries in which the double dinner is the rule. When you go to the house of a Russian, be he a friend or a stranger, you are at once invited to a side-table, where salted meats, pickled eggs, salted cucumbers, and many other spicy and appetizing viands are urged upon you with an impatience that knows no refusal. This repast is washed down with frequent cups of *vodka*. That over, and when the visitor feels as if he had eaten enough for twenty-four hours, the host says "and now to dinner." At the dinner-table the meal is served in courses, with wines grown in the Crimea and in Bessarabia, where excellent claret and Burgundies are made and sold, for from a shilling to half-a-crown the bottle.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

E. S. B.—The Great Western, we understand, has all three combined.

G. S. W.—The tooth can probably be saved by a dentist. Consult one without delay.

W. G. P.—Tied with pink golden brown; tied with white dark brown. Both pretty shades.

THE BARON.—Soak the tender feet well in hot water, and apply glacial acetic acid to the soft corns.

BROWN-EYED NELLIE.—1. Wash it frequently. 2 Do not meet him for the present alone. 3 Address the lady first. 4 It depends on what causes it. Try vinegar and sugar. 5. No. 6. Yes, certainly.

ONE IN TROUBLE.—You cannot sell goods on which you have raised money by bill of sale without the consent of the holder. Whoever bought them under such circumstances would have to give them up.

LIMA.—To thicken your hair take an ounce of Palma oil, adding oil of lavender to scent it. Let it be well bruised into the hair twice a day for two or three months. Try to take short steps when you walk, and be careful not to swing your body.

A. A.—You require a course of alterative medicines and very regular diet and way of living, with plenty of exercise. In the spring it is not at all uncommon for nature to throw off little impurities through the skin in the shape of pimples, for which local applications are useless.

NATHAN C.—The will is valid, and must be proved by the executors. The insurance agent has no right to take it away. It is, of course, impossible to advise properly without seeing a copy of the will, and it would be better and cheaper for you to employ a respectable solicitor.

W. E. G.—Persons in good physical condition and entirely free from any nervous disorder, can ordinarily use tea or coffee without harmful effects. Both beverages are, of course, mild stimulants, and as there are some persons with systems of such a nature as to render the use of any stimulant unadvisable, the use of either tea or coffee by such is harmful. Many scientists claim that milk should not be mixed with coffee, asserting that the mixture interferes with digestion.

W. F. B.—Conclave has several meanings: First, a private apartment, particularly the room in which the cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church meet in private, for the election of a Pope. Second, the assembly of the cardinals, shut up for the election of a Pope; hence, the body of cardinals. Third, a private meeting; a close assembly. Also applied to a literary club; as, "The verdicts pronounced by this conclave (Johnson's Club) on new books was speedily known over all London."

A. T. V.—Diet for a time on plain, well-cooked food, and be careful not to over eat. Take plenty of exercise in pure air, be regular in your habits, and take plenty of sleep. By doing these things your digestion will be improved, and your trouble, if it is caused by indigestion, will be diminished. If, however, your breath remains as offensive as before, you may conclude that some condition aside from indigestion occasions it and it would be advisable for you then to consult a physician.

E. S. W.—1. The Red Cross Knight is St. George, the patron saint of England, and, in the general interpretation, typifies holiness, or the perfection of the spiritual man in religion; but in a political and particular sense, his adventures are intended to show forth the history of the Church of England. 2. The Red Cross Knight is also a prominent character in Spenser's "Faery Queen." After slaying the dragon that had laid waste the kingdom of Una's father, he marries Una, and then enters upon other adventures assigned him by the fairy queen.

L. F. H.—To make charlotte russe, beat the yolks of four eggs, and stir them into one pint of scalding milk. Boil like custard and set away to cool. Pour a large cup of warm water over a half-box of gelatine, and set it in the stove, but let it not get hot. Beat the whites of the eggs very light, and add enough pulverized sugar to make them stiff. Then whip one pint of good cream and stir into the custard; then the whites of the eggs flavoured with vanilla; and then the gelatine well dissolved. Mix thoroughly and set away to cool, say about two hours. Line the dish with either sponge cake or lady fingers, and fill with the mixture. Let it stand five or six hours.

H. G.—Do you suppose that you really know your own heart—that you really know what it is that is impelling you to the course of action which you seem to have entered upon with regard to "the lady with whom you have been keeping company for eighteen months"? Do you know that she has been doing those things which you charge her with? Have you not been too ready to accept unfavourable reports against her? What proof have you of her treacherous conduct towards you? Do you think you would have acted so hastily and conclusively in the matter had it not been for that "other young lady" with whom you seem to be so anxious to form an alliance? It has been said that the human heart is deceitful above all things. You should look well into your own, and see if it is not deceiving you into a course of conduct that may give you cause for bitter repentance hereafter. You seem to be an honest man, and a good-hearted man; and if you will take time enough to think over the matters which so trouble you, it is probable that you will come to a fair decision on the subject; but beware how you allow that "other young lady" to have too much influence in shaping your decision.

E. A. A.—1. Executors do not always give bonds. If the will is silent on the subject, the executor is not obliged to give bonds, unless it is shown by some one interested in the will that he is an irresponsible person.

C. H. R.—To strengthen your voice take plenty of exercise in the outer air, and sing as much as possible. Reading aloud is also good for the lungs. Drink milk, and take a wine-glassful of cream every morning before breakfast. The white of an egg beaten up with sugar and eaten is a preventative of huskiness.

L. G. H.—An excellent article for cleaning furniture is made as follows: Mix together one pint of cold drawn linseed oil, one pint of the best vinegar, and half a pint of spirits of wine. Dip a soft cloth into the mixture and rub over the furniture, and then wipe thoroughly with a clean soft cloth. Always shake the mixture before using it.

R. C. D.—To make New Year's cakes take one and one quarter pounds of sugar, one pound of butter, one half pint of cold water, three eggs, three pounds of flour, one teaspoonful of soda dissolved in hot water, four teaspoonsfuls of caraway seeds sprinkled through the flour. Rub the butter in the flour, dissolve the sugar in the water, mix well with the beaten eggs, cut in square cakes, and bake quickly.

M. H. V.—1. According to the superstition associated with it, the fiery garnet is the stone of January, and it insures constancy and fidelity in every sort of engagement. To February belongs the amethyst, and he who is born in that month should wear the purple stone as a preservative against violent passions and dilapidation to which fate will tempt him. The light blue turquois is the gem of December, assuring prosperity in love. 2. The stone of misfortune, but also of hope, is the opal. It belongs to October.

NOTHING TO DO.

There are women and men in the world, not a few, who live upon day-dreams, with nothing to do; they visit, they gossip, advise you, in fine; But business and work are quite out of their line.

There's nothing in nature so idle as they, But they dress well, and seem to be happy each day; Good dinners they eat, but no calling pursue, Except when they "call" on your neighbour and you.

I would not accuse them of squandering a sou, But of the value of Time they make no ado; Good-natured and easy, its hours they slip through, As if in this world there were nothing to do.

They lack not some virtues, but study the art Of playing life's game without taking a part; They do not have wealth; and I wish that I knew How they glide on so smoothly with nothing to do.

If others have multiplied duties and care, They are not aroused, and they feel no despair; Some vocation or other they surely could find, Except that strict labour is not to their mind.

'Tis a curious misjudgment, for action is best, And those only who work have the solace of rest; The dismal life that a soul can pursue Is to live in a world where there's nothing to do.

J. B.

C. B. M.—1. A square Rhinestone buckle is considered good taste on black satin evening slippers. 2. Most evening toiletts, whether for balls or large dinner parties, are made in Empire style, but are modified instead of being exaggerated. 3. It is now the style to carry ornamental bags to the theatre, to hold the opera-glasses, fan, handkerchief, powder-box, little mirror, and, in fact, all the paraphernalia of a fashionable woman. 4. An exceedingly effective hair ornament is a diamond or Rhinestone butterfly or star, set on a spiral spring, so that it quivers with every motion of the head or body.

G. O. H.—You are right. Since the introduction of iron and steel ships, the needs of the mariner's compass has been playing such fantastic tricks that navigators have been rather nonplussed. It whirls about, and points this way and that, in such an eccentric way that it takes a fair knowledge of the phenomena of magnetism to comprehend its vagaries. But a means has been discovered, by a German scientist, of using electricity instead of the magnetic needle, for ascertaining the true north; and it is alleged that the electric method is so much superior to the old mode that it is likely to supersede the use of the compass.

AMY.—Citron is preserved by paring off the green skin and the soft white inner rind, then cut it into strips. Allow a pound and a quarter of sugar to each pound of rind. Line your kettle with vine leaves, and fill with the rind; scatter a little pulverized alum over each layer; cover with vine leaves three deep, pour on water enough to cover them, and lay a close lid on the top of the kettle. Let all steam for three hours, but do not boil. Take out your rind, which will be greened by this process, and throw it into very cold water. Let it soak, changing the water every hour, for four hours. For the syrup take two cupsfuls of water to a pound and a quarter of sugar. Boil and skim it until no more scum rises; put in the rind and simmer an hour. Take it out and spread upon dishes in the sun until firm and cool. Simmer in the syrup again for half an hour, then spread it out. After it is firm put it in a large bowl and pour over it the boiling syrup. Twelve hours later put the syrup on the fire, adding the juice of a lemon, and a tiny strip of ginger root for every pound of rind. Boil down until thick; pack the rind into jars, and pour the syrup over it.

A. M. P.—An ounce of the tincture of benzoin added to half a pint of distilled water makes an excellent wash for keeping the skin soft and free from chapping. Apply it night and morning, and after every ablation.

G. V. G.—Do not marry any man for whom you feel an aversion either in his company or out of it. You will know well enough when you truly love; and for your own sake it will be well if you do not give your heart away for several years to come. The only way to win a man's true love is to be modest, virtuous, truthful, industrious, and honourable. Do not seek to attract his attention, or you will repulse him, but by your worth make him respect you, and love borne of that respect will be worth keeping. It is rather unusual for a lady to ride without a saddle, but there is no vulgarity in the act. It only proves her a very fine equestrienne.

E. A. B.—The proportions of a beautiful model are thus given: The height should be exactly equal to the distance between the tips of the middle fingers of either hand when the arms are extended; ten times the length of the hand, or seven and a half times the length of the foot, or five times the diameter of the chest, from one armpit to the other, should also each give the height of the whole body. The distance from the hips to the feet should be quite or nearly the same as from that point to the crown of the head. The knee should be precisely midway between the same point and the bottom of the heel. The distance from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger should be the same as from the elbow to the middle of the breast. From the top of the head to the level of the chin should be the same as from the level of the chin to that of the armpits, and from the head to the toe.

LAWYER'S BOY.—A bill of lading is a written instrument acknowledging the receipt of certain goods, and promising to deliver them at the place directed. It is usual to sign two or three of the bills. If two, one is kept by the signer, and the other by the shipper. If three, the third is usually sent by mail to the consignee. A bill of lading is assignable, and the assignee is entitled to the goods, subject, however, to the shipper's right. The transfer may be made by blank or special indorsement, like bill of exchange. There being more than one bill of lading, it is possible there may be conflicting demands upon the carrier by the different holders; but the carrier is only required to act in good faith and to the best of his judgment, and he may deliver the goods to the person who first demands them, upon presentation of the bill of lading; and, hence, the conditions of the first bill having been fulfilled, the others stand void—that is, of no legal force or effect.

E. D. D.—The bull Apis was worshipped by the Egyptians because the soul of Osiris was supposed to inhabit his body. He was chosen from among the other cattle by a certain diacritical sign. The marks of the Apis were a black-coloured hide with a white triangular spot on the forehead, the hair arranged in the shape of an eagle on the back, and a knot under the tongue in the shape of a *scarabaeus*, the sacred insect and emblem of Ptah. Other animals were worshipped, but not as this one and Mnevis were, as these two were supposed to represent the sun and moon, and were both buried in Memphis. Yes; a universal joy prevailed at his discovery, and his birthday was kept as an annual festival. He was only allowed to live twenty-five years, then he was thrown into a cistern, in which the priests asserted he had precipitated himself. The reason he was killed when he had attained a quarter of a century was probably because old age made him a burden to the priests, as the preparation of food for such an old animal, who could not have any teeth, would consume a great deal of time.

H. A.—Yours is a very sad case. You say you love a married man with all your heart, and that he loves you; but that he can love but you. You say you would rather die than give him up; that life would not be worth living if you did, and yet you feel it is your duty to do so, but he will not help you in your struggle to keep him true to his wife. From the bottom of the heart that writes this comes a wish to help you, though the words it is duty to pen seem harsh and cold. For a woman to love another woman's husband means only anguish and discolour if her love is discovered. Knowing the misery it will cause you, you must be told that to remain near this man will be your ruin and his shame. He has a wife whom he has sworn to love and protect, and as you cannot be his wife, your love for him is all wrong. For your own sake leave him. Tell him if he has a spark of manhood in his heart, or any real love for you, that he will help you to go, as it is a lover's duty to strive for the welfare of the being beloved. As for you, apart from him, put your whole soul in your work, determine to crush your unhappy love from your heart, and though the struggle may be painful, you will conquer yourself and be a far better woman hereafter.

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FOR THE WEEK ENDING APRIL 27, 1889.

[PRICE ONE PENNY,



["I AM AT YOUR MERCY, BUT I NEVER WILL BE YOUR WIFE EXCEPT IN NAME!"]

A FEARFUL SECRET.

CHAPTER VI.

JANETA LEIGH, Mrs. Carlyle's humble companion—albeit no humiliations had ever fallen to her lot at Hillington Place—stood a little in the background as the other ladies crowded round Lord Drew and spoke their eager welcome. For a moment she felt strangely out in the cold. Mrs. Carlyle she knew was a distant relation of the new-comer—indeed, for years had been to him a kind of second mother. Janeta could understand how her kind friend's warm-hearted nature would cling to the one among her kindred who could not be suspected of mercenary designs.

Lord Drew had an ample fortune of his own. Besides, he was no kin to the late Geoffrey Carlyle, therefore he stood beyond the pale. Never by any chance would he become a "candidate," so it was natural enough that Mrs. Carlyle should delight in him; but that

Mrs. Biden and her seven plain daughters should claim a right in the eccentric young nobleman seemed to Janeta absurd.

She stood apart, her beautiful eyes fixed on the fire, as though she read a story written in the flames, and she thought the while that her seven contemporaries need not have shown Lord Drew so very plainly that any one of them would have been happy to console him for Lady Claudine's treachery. Mrs. Carlyle's voice recalled her to herself.

"Nettie" said the widow gently, "come here. I want to introduce you to Lord Drew. Jack, this is my dear little friend and namesake, Janeta Leigh."

Lord Drew's hand was ready. What a true hearty grasp he had! But his keen eyes seemed reading her through and through. Janeta felt herself flushed crimson. She remembered how intimate her husband had been with his cousin. Could he have told him of his brief romance and the cruel deception he had practised? Could it be that Lord Drew had heard her miserable story and knew her secret? His first words dispelled her fears.

"I told you, Miss Leigh, we should meet again?"

Mrs. Carlyle started.

"Nettie! you never told me you knew Lord Drew?"

The seven Misses Biden looked so much annoyed that Janeta recovered her composure from sheer amusement at their perturbed faces.

"I never knew I did," she returned, frankly. "I met a stranger in a train last September, and we exchanged our views on some of the problems of life; but I had no idea he was Lord Drew! I fancied, from his conversation, he was a strolling artist!"

"Miss Leigh!" in seven different tones of horror from seven young ladies, but Lord Drew was laughing heartily, and Mrs. Carlyle also.

"I'm glad I look professional!" said the peer, cheerfully. "It would be an uncomfortable idea to know I went about trying to impress people with the accident of my having a handle to my name. You are quite right, Miss Leigh! I am an artist—at least, it is the ambition of my life to deserve the name; and

as to scrolling, I have done a great deal of that the last two years."

"Far, far too much," said Mrs. Biden, glibly. "I do hope now you are going to settle down at home!"

"I am going to settle at Hillington Place for Christmas," he returned, coolly. "That is, if my dear old aunt will admit such a roving individual."

The idea of Lord Drew's retiring to dress was promptly set aside. The party gathered anew around the table, and dinner was resumed. It certainly ended far more cheerfully than it had begun.

Lord Drew did not speak much—indeed, it struck Janeta he was unusually silent; but the very fact of his presence added a zest to the repast, and Janeta felt wickedly positive in her own mind that Mrs. Biden was casting up the virtues of her various daughters, and wondering which catalogue would prove most attractive to Lord Drew.

Laura sat next him—and Laura was, to Nettie's mind, the nicest of the family. He was kind and attentive to her, but to the companion's eye there was nothing in the least loverlike in his demeanour. Some strange impulse made Janeta watch them rather closely.

Laura had a flush of animation, and looked almost pretty, yet she was supposed to be wearing the willow for Lord Drew's cousin. The explanation was soon coming. Presently, when a boy of voices at the other end of the table seemed likely to screen her from notice, Laura asked in a low voice, just audible enough to reach Nettie, who sat opposite—

"Lord Drew, is he your cousin?"

The girl, who had a right to wear the cousin's wedding-ring, listened with intense anxiety for the answer.

"He's very well, Laura. I tried to persuade him to come here for Christmas; but he seemed to think he would be unwelcome. You see he has offended my aunt, and—"

"He never did anything wrong!" cried Laura, still in that suppressed voice, but with two pink spots burning in her cheeks. "I think Aunt Janeta ought to be made to say what she has against him. It is not fair to make a mystery of it in this way!"

Lord Drew's face grew grave. His whole manner changed.

"Believe me, Laura, your aunt has good reasons. I should have liked to see John here just for Christmas; but I think Mrs. Carlyle quite right to refuse him the old intimacy. I am very fond of him. I can't help it somehow, but even I confess he is not trustworthy."

"Then you have turned against him now you are rich. I think riches make people detestable!"

"I daresay they do. But I don't think I've 'turned against' John Drew, Laura! He has free quarters wherever I happen to be, and he knows whenever he is hard up my purse is open to him. I would settle an income on him directly if it were any use!"

Laura evidently thought the income would send her lover back to her.

"Then why don't you? It would be the making of him!"

"I happen to differ from you!" said Lord Drew, dryly. "Any settled income would ruin John. He would spend a quarter's cheque in a week, and if one tried to prevent that by arranging for it to be paid in instalments, he would mortgage half a year's allowance for a lump sum."

"You are hard on him!"

"I don't think so. You can't guess the pang it is to me not to be able to believe in him. We were like brothers once. I shall never love another man as I have loved John, and yet—his voice had a thrill of sadness which touched Janeta keenly—"I can't trust him. I believe I would give half my fortune to get back my faith in him, but I can't do it. There are two things, Laura, gold cannot mend, a trusted trust and a broken heart."

Mrs. Carlyle made the signal for the ladies

to retire. As she passed Lord Drew, she said with a smile,—

"You know your way to the drawing-room?"

He did, and joined them in a very few minutes.

Janeta sat behind a tray of silver and china, dispensing coffee. Lord Drew strolled up to her, and sat down.

"I little thought I should find you here, Miss Leigh! How do you like Yorkshire?"

"Every one asks me that!"

"Then I will alter my question. How do you like life at Hillington Place? Are you happy here?"

Nettie slightly altered the question again before she answered it.

"I like Hillington Place very much. Mrs. Carlyle is so kind to me; it seems like a new life!"

"Poor child!" muttered Lord Drew, half to himself. "You speak as though kindness had been rare." Then, in a different voice, "And has Hillington Place cured you of your ambitious wishes?"

"I don't think I was ambitious!"

"Pardon me! I have a distinct recollection of your telling me you wanted to be rich. I can't think of any house so suited to cure any one of such a wish as Aunt Janeta's!"

"Why?"

"Because there are so many people near who desire the same thing. When you see my aunt's 'candidates,' and their—~~aspirations~~ for wealth, I think it is enough to make anyone prefer poverty itself!"

"I feel sorry for them!"

"I feel sorry for my aunt. It was a monstrous will. Far better have named her heir or left her perfectly free. From what I can see of her affection for you, Miss Leigh, I fancy in that case you would have had your wish, and some day have found yourself a very rich woman."

Janeta shuddered.

"I don't want to be a rich woman!"

Lord Drew smiled.

"Then Hillington Place has cured you, after all?"

He little guessed it was only at that moment the desire for wealth had left her. It had flashed upon her suddenly that were she rich her husband might discover it, and insist on revealing their marriage, and her returning to him. Better any poverty than that, for every fibre of Janeta's heart abhorred Lord Drew's own words, "No gold can restore a shattered faith."

Christmas passed, the candidates arrived, were feasted and made much of. Then they left, as anxious as ever. The Bidens stayed till the utmost limits to which their invitation could be stretched, and till they had made themselves detested by all the other candidates. Then at last February came, and found Mrs. Carlyle and Janeta with but one guest, Lord Drew.

He often talked of going home. Indeed, Alandyke had been prepared to receive him; but it was a lonely place for a single man, and he had almost a son's affection for Mrs. Carlyle, so he lingered on at Hillington, much to that lady's delight; for she was too true a woman not to take a pleasure in match-making, and she had conceived the bold design of making her favourite Jack happy by marrying him to bright-eyed Nettie Leigh.

She never said a word of her wishes. She knew silence was her best chance of success. Lord Drew's early disappointment would make him chary of having a wife selected for him, and Janeta—well, with all her love for the girl, Mrs. Carlyle often confessed to herself she could not quite understand her old friend's child.

So the wily widow said never a word of her own hopes. She sent Lord Drew and Nettie on errands together, as composedly as though they had been brother and sister. She gave them every chance and opportunity for falling in love, and then she waited patiently for the result.

She made no concealment about her ~~pro~~ history. Indeed, Janeta herself was on most points open as the day. Lord Drew knew all about her hard life at Normanton, and the scanty affection meted out to her by her aunt. He heard of the shabby dresses and the schoolgirls, and even of her coming to Brixton, and her first visit to Mrs. Carlyle. It seemed to him the girl's history was before him as an open book. He never noticed that of the month spent at Dorbury she made no mention, unless compelled, and then gave short uncommunicative answers.

"This is very beautiful!" said Jack, one day, when he and Nettie had been driving Mrs. Carlyle to a distant cottage, and were extending their drive during her charitable visit. "I have knocked about a great deal the last two years, but I never saw anything finer than the Yorkshire hills!"

"Isn't that only another way of saying, 'there's no place like home?'" asked Miss Leigh.

"Perhaps! I own I am inordinately fond of Yorkshire. You are a southerner, Miss Leigh. Which is your native county?"

"I was born in London; but I lived longest at Normanton."

"And you have been to Dorbury. Dorset is pretty."

"I hate it!"

The words seemed wrung from her almost in spite of herself. Lord Drew felt puzzled.

"I thought the first time I met you you shared my admiration for Dorbury? It is a dear little place."

"I was happy then," said Janeta, in a strange, dreamy voice, "but please don't talk of it, Lord Drew. I can't bear to think of Dorbury!"

"Why not?"

"I can't explain it to you. It was the turning point of my life—the end of all the miserable drudgery and poverty at Norman-

ton. I suppose that's why!"

"Do you know I have quite an extensive encampment stowed away at Dorbury. I had been thinking of setting up my huts again there next spring, and getting you and Aunt Janeta to put up at the hotel, and be my frequent guests!"

Nettie trembled, as though smitten with a sudden fear.

"Please don't," she said, in a sad, pathetic voice, from which she tried in vain to check the sobs. "Lord Drew, I can't explain it to you; but please don't ask your aunt to take me to Dorbury. I think it would break my heart."

Lord Drew looked at her gravely.

"Did any heavy trouble befall you there? Forgive the question; but you know I do not put it out of curiosity. Nettie, can't you trust me?"

"Better than anyone else in the world," said Janeta, quietly; "but I can't explain this to you. I was happy at Dorbury! Life seemed just like a bright dream to me. I was full of glad expectation, when I left the place to come to London, and seek my fortune."

Lord Drew looked puzzled.

"And you saw my aunt the very next day? I don't think she has let life press very hardly on you since. Why should all your glad expectations have failed?"

Nettie shook her head.

"You had a friend with you at Dorbury. Did you quarrel? Girls do, sometimes, you know."

"I could not have quarrelled with Nathalie. She was almost the first creature who loved me; and she was such a dear, sunny-tempered, little thing! I used to call her my West Indian humming bird. Oh, no; Nathalie and I never quarrelled. She was very good to me, and we used to plan that when Mr. Duval came home I should go and live with him and Nathalie, if he did not object to a second daughter."

"I think my aunt will object to the plan very much indeed, and I am sure I shall!"

"It will never come to pass. Nathalie caught a cold at Christmas time. She was never very strong; and they wrote and told me early this year she was dead!"

She tears flowed down Nettie's cheeks.

She had grieved very truly for her dear little friend, and almost hated herself for feeling that her secret was the safer since Nathalie was the only living creature who knew of her intimacy with "Mr. John."

"Then that explains it all," said Lord Drew, cheerfully. "Of course, you hate Dorbury because it is connected with Miss Duval; you would not like to go back to it because it would remind you of her?"

"I never thought of that."

"But, nevertheless, it is the reason. You must forget the South, Nettie, and cast it in your life with us North-country people. Your father has done so already. He told me the other day he should never leave Yorkshire."

For Captain Leigh and his wife had been to the Place for three days; and Mrs. Carlyle, noting Jack's attentions to Nettie's people, decided in her own mind the match she longed for would certainly come off.

A notion of the same kind had also entered the Captain's brain, and made him affectionate, and almost deferential, in his manner to his eldest daughter.

"Papa is sure to stop at Sandford," said Janeta, frankly, "because Ada has a house there, and they live rent-free. That is a great consideration for him."

"I like her—Mrs. Leigh, I mean—she seems so true!"

"I think truth is your favourite virtue," said Janeta, dreamily. "The first time I ever saw you you told me nothing mattered so long as one was true."

"And you have remembered that ever since?"

"Ever since."

Mrs. Carlyle, who had walked to meet them, here appeared and interrupted the *tête-à-tête*.

Had she only known the avowal trembling on Jack's lips, she would rather have walked ten miles in the other direction than have postponed the accomplishment of her darling's scheme.

But she had no suspicion how fatal was her sudden arrival; and took her place beside Janeta with the utmost complacency.

"You had better drive straight home, Jack," she said to Lord Drew. "It is getting late, and I am longing for a cup of tea."

It was the pleasantest hour of the twenty-four, to Lord Drew's mind, when the little family gathered in the old oak hall, and Nettie poured out tea for him and Mrs. Carlyle.

Often the latter, tired with her walk or drive, leaned back in her chair, half asleep; and he and Nettie were virtually *tête-à-tête*.

She used to look so slight and childlike in her heavy velvet gown, the firelight falling on her pretty hair, and burning it to threads of gold.

It was always thus he loved to picture her in the sad, dark afternoons, when they two were parted asunder as utterly as though oceans had rolled between them. Always thus, as the little household fairy, he loved to think of her.

A maid came and took the ladies' wraps.

The tea was brought in, and Nettie took her place behind the silver urn.

She had sat like this dozens of times, and yet Lord Drew thought he had never seen her look so sweet, so lovable before.

Mrs. Carlyle, contrary to her habit, was wide awake and talkative.

There was no chance of resuming that interrupted *tête-à-tête*; and yet Lord Drew was well content as he sat next, Janeta, and thought how pretty a picture she would make transplanted to his grand old home.

"We really must give a party," Mrs. Carlyle was saying in her low, musical voice. "The Biden girls—except the ones who have forsaken the world—have bothered my life out about it for months; and now their father's old regiment is quartered in the neighbour-

hood seems a famous opportunity. I should have settled it days ago, only I thought, Jack, perhaps you would be having some entertainment at Alandyke, and I did not want to clash with that."

"Do you mean to hint, you inhospitable lady, that you are getting tired of me?" inquired Jack, lightly. "Are you really anxious for me to take my departure, and leave you and Miss Leigh to your peaceful solitude?"

"You know I want you as long as you can stay, Jack; but—people expect you to do something."

"I hate balls," he confessed; "but I'll dance at yours with pleasure, and people must give up expecting me to be hospitable. I have no talent for that sort of thing. Alandyke must wait for guests until it has a mistress to entertain them, if such a day ever comes."

"It will come right enough," said Mrs. Carlyle, a little vexed at his calmness. "If you think no one under an angel good enough for you, John Drew won't be so particular when he is Lord of Alandyke."

There was a sound of falling china, a crash of breaking—Janeta had let one of the delicate cups fall to the ground.

"My dear child," said Mrs. Carlyle, kindly, "What are you trembling for? Do you imagine I am going to beat you? There are cups enough in the house for twenty to be broken without any serious inconvenience. Why, your teeth are actually trembling. My dear, this is being too nervous!"

"I could not help it," murmured Janeta. "It slipped right out of my hand."

"No wonder," said Jack, simply, "for your fingers are as cold as ice. Come near the fire, and warm them."

She knelt on the hearthrug for a few seconds with the pretty hands stretched before the welcome blaze; then she rose abruptly, and said she would go upstairs.

"She looks like a sheet!" said Mrs. Carlyle, when the door had closed on her. "She can't be well. I never thought her nervous or fanciful before."

"And I have often fancied she was nervous or oversensitive," said Lord Drew. "Do you think her father worries her for money? He looks just the sort of man."

Mrs. Carlyle shook her head.

"I know he has never asked her for a half-penny. She sent him a Christmas present, for Mrs. Leigh told me as much. The Captain is rather careless about money matters, but he is a gentleman—he would not prey on his own child."

"But are you sure of it?"

"I am positive! A little while ago I asked Nettie if they were poor, and she told me they had a small, fixed income. No, it is not that."

"And she has no love affair?—no trouble of that kind?"

"Of course she hasn't!" declared Mrs. Carlyle. "Why, she'd never seen a young man except her cousins till she came here. And you don't suppose she is the kind of girl to lose her heart to one of the 'candidates'? She sees no one else here."

"I thought"—he spoke slowly, as one who weighs his words—"I mean I fancied she was not happy. Not so happy as one would expect your adopted child to be."

"Well, she fretted a great deal about that child at Normanton; and you know she had a sad time before she came to me. I find no fault with Nettie. I should hate a companion who was always giggling."

"So should I."

"Nettie suits me exactly," went on Mrs. Carlyle. "If only she does not marry I shall think myself lucky."

"And you will cordially detest the man who tries to rob you of her?"

Mrs. Carlyle looked at him keenly.

"Not if he made her happy."

To Mrs. Carlyle's own mind Janeta's sudden nervousness admitted but one explanation. It was at the mere suggestion that John Drew might yet be Lord of Alandyke she had lost

composure. Now that suggestion implied Jack's death.

Too loyal to Nettie to breathe the suspicion to the man concerned, the widow saw in the girl's agitation a positive proof that her plans had succeeded with one of her intended victims.

Nettie must love Lord Drew, or she would not have betrayed such emotion at the bare idea of his death.

"Men are born simpletons," decided the widow. "Why didn't he see that as well as I did? But Jack seems very much taken with her; and he's not the sort of man to do anything in a hurry. I shall have my way yet, and see my pretty Nettie Lady of Alandyke, and that hateful John Drew dethroned from his position as heir presumptive!"

The dressing-ball rang out clear and sharp. Mrs. Carlyle rose to leave the hall.

"I shall tell Nettie not to come to dinner if she feels tired. I don't want the child knocked up."

"It might be better to send for the doctor," suggested Jack, anxiously. "I don't like these sudden chills."

"I will send if it seems necessary; but I expect she will be all right in the morning," said Mrs. Carlyle, much mollified by his concern.

She went upstairs to the pretty rooms she had delighted to beautify and make homelike for her favourite.

Nettie was in the little study, lying on the sofa, her beautiful eyes closed, and an expression of anguish on her fair young face which went to her friend's heart.

The eyes are the windows of the soul; from them our thoughts and feelings are disclosed to our fellow-creatures; but let the "windows" be closed, and the story is revealed even more clearly by the other features which in our waking, active life are little studied.

It was so now with Janeta. Mrs. Carlyle saw, with concern, the lines of pain about the small mouth, the shadow on the brow. Jack was right. This was not the face of a "happy" girl, but what trouble could Janeta have? What thorn could have crept into the path she would so fain have strewn with roses?

Nettie was not asleep. Even as her friend bent over her she opened her eyes and whispered,—

"I am so sorry!"

"My dear girl, I shall be seriously angry if you mention that wretched cup again. I want to know if you are ill or in trouble? You look like a little ghost!"

"I am quite well."

"Then why do you look so pale?"

"I am very tired," said Janeta, faintly,

"and my head aches; but, indeed, I am not ill.

I think if I stayed here instead of coming down to dinner I should be all right in the morning."

"You had much better go to bed," decided her friend, "and Nancy shall bring your dinner there."

"I could not eat anything. I feel so tired."

"Then, dear, take my advice, and go to bed. I will come up and look at you before I go to my own room, and I shall send for the doctor the first thing to-morrow. Now remember, Nettie, you must get better."

Nettie smiled automatically.

"I am not ill—only tired."

"But, my dear, people don't get tired all in a second, and you were quite right when we came home."

With many a fond caress she left Janeta, and the maid Nancy soon appeared to help the young lady to bed; but Nettie had a wonderful influence over servants. Those at Hillington all well-nigh worshipped her, and she soon made Nancy understand she preferred to remain on the sofa, and also that she did not want the news of her disobedience carried to Mrs. Carlyle.

Ding, ding, dong, the bell for dinner. The meal was a sumptuous one, and lasted some time. For a whole hour Janeta was safe from observation; and, with a weary sigh, she drew

April 20, 1889.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

H. S. B.—The Great Western, we understand, has all three combined.

O. S. W.—The tooth can probably be saved by a dentist. Consult one without delay.

W. G. P.—Tied with pink golden brown; tied with white dark brown. Both pretty shades.

THE BARON.—Soak the tender feet well in hot water, and apply glacial acetic acid to the soft corns.

BROWN EYED NELLIE.—1. Wash it frequently. 2 Do not meet him for the present alone. 3 Address the lady first. 4. It depends on what causes it. Try vinegar and sugar. 5. No. 6. Yes, certainly.

ONE IN TROUBLE.—You cannot sell goods on which you have raised money by bill of sale without the consent of the holder. Whoever bought them under such circumstances would have to give them up.

LISA.—To thicken your hair take an ounce of Palma oil, adding off of lavender to scent it. Let it be well brushed into the hair twice a day for two or three months. Try to take short steps when you walk, and be careful not to swing your body.

A. A.—You require a course of alterative medicine and very regular diet and way of living, with plenty of exercise. In the spring it is not at all uncommon for nature to throw off little impurities through the skin in the shape of pimples, for which local applications are useless.

NATHAN C.—The will is valid, and must be proved by the executors. The insurance agent has no right to take it away. It is, of course, impossible to advise properly without seeing a copy of the will, and it would be better and cheaper for you to employ a respectable solicitor.

W. E. G.—Persons in good physical condition and entirely free from any nervous disorder, can ordinarily use tea or coffee without harmful effects. Both beverages are, of course, mild stimulants, and as there are some persons with systems of such a nature as to render the use of any stimulant undesirable, the use of either tea or coffee by such is harmful. Many scientists claim that milk should not be mixed with coffee, asserting that the mixture interferes with digestion.

W. F. B.—Conclave has several meanings: First, a private apartment, particularly the room in which the cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church meet in private, for the election of a Pope. Second, the assembly of the cardinals, shut up for the election of a Pope; hence, the body of cardinals. Third, a private meeting; a close assembly. Also applied to a literary club; as, "The verdict pronounced by this conclave (Johnson's Club) on new books was speedily known over all London."

A. T. V.—Diet for a time on plain, well-cooked food, and be careful not to over eat. Take plenty of exercise in pure air, be regular in your habits, and take plenty of sleep. By doing these things your digestion will be improved, and your trouble, if it is caused by indigestion, will be diminished. If, however, your breath remains as offensive as before, you may conclude that some condition aside from indigestion occasions it, and it would be advisable for you then to consult a physician.

E. S. W.—1. The Red Cross Knight is St. George, the patron saint of England, and, in the general interpretation, typifies holiness, or the perfection of the spiritual man in religion; but in a political and particular sense, his adventures are intended to show forth the history of the Church of England. 2. The Red Cross Knight is also a prominent character in Spenser's "Faery Queen." After slaying the dragon that had laid waste the kingdom of Una's father, he married Una, and then enters upon other adventures assigned him by the fairy queen.

L. F. H.—To make charlotte russe, beat the yolks of four eggs, and stir them into one pint of scalding milk. Boil like custard and set away to cool. Pour a large cup of warm water over a half-box of gelatine, and set it in the stove, but let it not get hot. Beat the whites of the eggs very light, and add enough pulverised sugar to make them stiff. Then whip one pint of good cream and stir into the custard; then the whites of the eggs flavoured with vanilla; and then the gelatine well dissolved. Mix thoroughly and set away to cool, say about two hours. Line the dish with either sponge cake or lady fingers, and fill with the mixture. Let it stand five or six hours.

H. G.—Do you suppose that you really know your own heart—that you really know what it is that is impelling you to the course of action which you seem to have entered upon with regard to "the lady with whom you have been keeping company for eighteen months?" Do you know that she has been doing those things while you charge her with? Have you not been too ready to accept unfavourable reports against her? What proof have you of her treacherous conduct towards you? Do you think you would have acted so hastily and conclusively in the matter had it not been for that "other young lady" with whom you seem to be so anxious to form an alliance? It has been said that the human heart is deceitful above all things. You should look well into your own, and see if it is not deceiving you into a course of conduct that may give you cause for bitter repentance hereafter. You seem to be an honest man, and a good-hearted man; and if you will take time enough to think over the matters which so trouble you, it is probable that you will come to a fair decision on the subject; but beware how you allow that "other young lady" to have too much influence in shaping your decision.

E. A. A.—1. Executors do not always give bonds. If the will is silent on the subject, the executor is not obliged to give bonds, unless it is shown by some one interested in the will that he is an irresponsible person.

C. H. R.—To strengthen your voice take plenty of exercise in the outer air, and sing as much as possible. Reading aloud is also good for the lungs. Drink milk, and take a wine-glassful of cream every morning before breakfast. The white of an egg beaten up with sugar and eaten is a preventative of huskiness.

L. G. H.—An excellent article for cleaning furniture is made as follows: Mix together one pint of cold drawn linseed oil, one pint of the best vinegar, and half a pint of spirits of wine. Dip a soft cloth into the mixture and rub over the furniture, and then wipe thoroughly with a clean soft cloth. Always shake the mixture before using it.

R. C. D.—To make New Year's cakes take one and one quarter pounds of sugar, one pound of butter, one half pint of cold water, three eggs, three pounds of flour, one teaspoonful of soda dissolved in hot water, four teaspoonfuls of caraway seeds sprinkled through the flour. Rub the butter in the flour, dissolve the sugar in the water, mix well with the beaten eggs, cut in square cakes, and bake quickly.

M. H. V.—1. According to the superstition associated with it, the fiery garnet is the stone of January, and it insures constancy and fidelity in every sort of engagement. To February belongs the amethyst, and he who is born in that month should wear the purple stone as a preservative against violent passions and dissipation to which fate will tempt him. The light blue turquoise is the gem of December, assuring prosperity in love. 2. The stone of misfortune, but also of hope, is the opal. It belongs to October.

NOTHING TO DO.

There are women and men in the world, not a few, Who live upon day-dreams, with nothing to do; They visit, they gossip, advise you, in fine; But business and work are quite out of their line.

There's nothing in nature so idle as they, But they dress well, and seem to be happy each day; Good dinners they eat, but no calling purse, Except when they "call" on your neighbour and you.

I would not accuse them of squandering a sou, But of the value of Time they make no ado; Good-natured and easy, its hours they slip through, As if in this world there were nothing to do.

They lack not some virtues, but study the art Of playing life's game without taking a part: They do not have wealth; and I wish that I knew How they glide on so smoothly with nothing to do.

If others have multiplied duties and care, They are not aroused, and they feel no despair; Some vocation or other they surely could find, Except that strict labour is not to their mind.

'Tis a curious misjudgment, for action is best, And those only who work have the solace of rest; The dismallest life that a soul can pursue Is to live in a world where there's nothing to do.

J. B.

C. B. M.—1. A square Rhinestone buckle is considered good taste on black satin evening slippers. 2. Most evening toilets, whether for balls or large dinner parties, are made in Empire style, but are modified instead of being exaggerated. 3. It is now the style to carry ornamental bags to the theatre, to hold the opera-glasses, fan, handkerchief, powder-box, little mirror, and, in fact, all the paraphernalia of a fashionable woman. 4. An exceedingly effective hair ornament is a diamond or Rhinestone butterfly or star, set on a spiral spring, so that it quivers with every motion of the head or body.

G. C. H.—You are right. Since the introduction of iron and steel ships, the needle of the mariner's compass has been playing such fantastic tricks that navigators have been rather nonplussed. It whirls about, and points this way and that, in such an eccentric way that it takes a fair knowledge of the phenomena of magnetism to comprehend its vagaries. But a means has been discovered, by a German scientist, of using electricity instead of the magnetic needle, for ascertaining the true north; and it is alleged that the electric method is so much superior to the old mode that it is likely to supersede the use of the compass.

AMY.—Citron is preserved by paring off the green skin and the soft white inner rind, then cut it into strips. Allow a pound and a quarter of sugar to each pound of rind. Line your kettle with vine leaves, and fill with the rind; scatter a little pulverised alum over each layer; cover with vine leaves three deep, pour on water enough to cover them, and lay a close lid on the top of the kettle. Let all steam for three hours, but do not boil. Take out your rind, which will be greened by this process, and throw it into very cold water. Let it soak, changing the water every hour, for four hours. For the syrup take two cupsfuls of water to a pound and a quarter of sugar. Boil and skim it until no more scum rises; put in the rind and simmer an hour. Take it out and spread upon dishes in the sun until firm and cool. Simmer in the syrup again for half an hour, then spread it out. After it is firm put it in a large bowl and pour over it the boiling syrup. Twelve hours later put the syrup on the fire, adding the juice of a lemon, and a tiny strip of ginger root for every pound of rind. Boil down until thick; pack the rind into jars, and pour the syrup over it.



A. M. P.—An ounce of the tincture of benzoin added to half a pint of distilled water makes an excellent wash for keeping the skin soft and free from chapping. Apply it night and morning, and after every ablation.

G. V. G.—Do not marry any man for whom you feel an aversion either in his company or out of it. You will know well enough when you truly love; and for your own sake it will be well if you do not give your heart away for several years to come. The only way to win a man's true love is to be modest, virtuous, truthful, industrious, and honourable. Do not seek to attract his attention, or you will repulse him, but by your worth make him respect you, and love borne of that respect will be worth keeping. It is rather unusual for a lady to ride without a saddle, but there is no vulgarity in the act. It only proves her a very fine equestrienne.

E. A. B.—The proportions of a beautiful model are thus given: The height should be exactly equal to the distance between the tips of the middle fingers of either hand when the arms are extended; ten times the length of the hand, or seven and a half times the length of the foot, or five times the diameter of the chest, from one armpit to the other, should also each give the height of the whole body. The distance from the hips to the feet should be quite or nearly the same as from that point to the crown of the head. The knee should be precisely midway between the same point and the bottom of the heel. The distance from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger should be the same as from the elbow to the middle of the breast. From the top of the head to the level of the chin should be the same as from the level of the chin to that of the armpits, and from the heel to the toe.

LAWYER'S BOY.—A bill of lading is a written instrument acknowledging the receipt of certain goods, and promising to deliver them at the place directed. It is usual to sign two or three of the bills. If two, one is kept by the signer, and the other by the shipper. If three, the third is usually sent by mail to the consignee. A bill of lading is assignable, and the assignee is entitled to the goods, subject, however, to the shipper's right. The transfer may be made by blank or special indorsement, like bill of exchange. There being more than one bill of lading, it is possible there may be conflicting demands upon the carrier by the different holders; but the carrier is only required to act in good faith and to the best of his judgment, and he may deliver the goods to the person who first demands them, upon presentation of the bill of lading; and, hence, the conditions of the first bill having been fulfilled, the others stand void—that is, of no legal force or effect.

E. D. D.—The bull Apis was worshipped by the Egyptians because the soul of Osiris was supposed to inhabit his body. He was chosen from among the other cattle by a certain ascritical sign. The marks of the Apis were a black-coloured hide with a white triangular spot on the forehead, the hair arranged in the shape of an eagle on the back, and a knot under the tongue in the shape of a *scrabaeus*, the sacred insect and emblem of Ptah. Other animals were worshipped, but not as this one and Mnevis were, as these two were supposed to represent the sun and moon, and were both buried in Memphis. Yes: a universal joy prevailed at his discovery, and his birthday was kept as an annual festival. He was only allowed to live twenty-five years, then he was thrown into a cistern, in which the priests asserted he had precipitated himself. The reason he was killed probably because old age made him a burden to the priests, as the preparation of food for such an old animal, who could not have any teeth, would consume a great deal of time.

E. A.—Yours is a very sad case. You say you love a married man with all your heart, and that he loves you; that he says he will be kind and good to his wife, but that he can love but you. You say you would rather die than give him up; that life would not be worth living if you did, and yet you feel it is your duty to do so, but he will not help you in your struggle to keep him true to his wife. From the bottom of the heart that writes this comes a wish to help you, though the words it is duty to pen seem harsh and cold. For a woman to love another woman's husband means only anguish and dis honour if her love is discovered. Knowing the misery it will cause you, you must be told that to remain near this man will be your ruin and his shame. He has a wife whom he has sworn to love and protect, and as you cannot be his wife, your love for him is all wrong. For your own sake leave him. Tell him if he has a spark of manhood in his heart, or any real love for you, that he will help you to go, as it is a lover's duty to strive for the welfare of the being beloved. And for you, apart from him, put your whole soul in your work, determine to crush your unhappy love from your heart, and though the struggle may be painful, you will conquer yourself and be a far better woman hereafter.

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